

NATIONAL
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PAPER OF THE YEAR

G2 pages 12-13



Sketch

Prescott rides to nation's rescue



Simon Hoggart

I HAD an important appointment yesterday. I missed it. I'd made the mistake of taking a private train — but this didn't matter since at least I was in time for John Prescott's epoch-making statement about how we should all travel on public transport.

Nor was the 45 minutes spent motionless in stifling heat outside Waterloo entirely wasted. (Railtrack, a vastly profitable monopoly, spends a pitiful amount on maintenance, so delays like this are a daily event.)

As I waited I was able to do a few sums on the back of a timetable (I always take a work of fiction on long journeys). Yesterday on Radio 4, Mr Prescott had said that if present trends continued, we would soon need "a motorway 150 lanes wide between here and Leeds".

It's a metaphor he's used before, though the number of lanes seems to have risen from 100. Assuming a three-second gap between cars, and an average of two people per vehicle, this highway would enable the entire population of Leeds to transfer to London in four hours, and everyone in London to move to Leeds in just under two days.

It's a classic example of politicians' hyperbole, being both meaningless and inaccurate. You might as well say that, since the temperature yesterday was 50 degrees higher than on January 20, "if present trends continue, the temperature will be 135 degrees on Christmas Day, and thousands will die from heatstroke".

The Tories had decided to back Mr Prescott, which was a mistake. It's like hooking Frankenstein's monster up to the lightning conductor: every jolt renews his energy and aggression.

They laughed at everything. Last year, he said, two records

had been broken. "One million rail passengers complained, and a record number of rail millionaires were created. What an indictment of privatisation!"

And so it is. But Labour could have killed it if they had promised to renationalise. They are almost as much to blame as the Tories for the "bus passengers have fallen" he added. They certainly have on our route: every time the driver lets in the clutch three more pensioners hit the floor. "Car drivers sit in congestion for hours!" he went on. "In their Jags!" yelled a Tory, referring to Mr Prescott's official limo and similar private runabout.

There should be better training for bus drivers. "The one I met yesterday could benefit from a visit to charm school — probably the same one I attended," he added, puzzlingly. Perhaps he didn't realise: you're not supposed to take your Jag on the bus. "For too long, the bus has been seen as a workhorse. I would like it to be a racehorse." They guffawed in mockery ("Who wrote this stuff? Did you?"), though Mr Prescott has been far better educated than most of them.

And when he declared: "Let no one say we are not putting our money where our mouth is," they rolled around in ersatz paroxysms, because they know that what he really needs is an integrated syntax policy for John Prescott.

This could be enforced by one of the many new quangos he announced yesterday. The Ford Quango — that has a ring. As does the Vauxhall Viagra.

Listeners to Mr Prescott need to be assured that once a noun has arrived, a verb will be available soon afterwards. They are fed up with words that are too short for rush-hour demand — and it is always rush hour in a Prescott speech — so that priority becomes "prity", ownership "o'ship", and hypotheation sounds as if he is in the grip of an asthma attack.

One thing we do know. Privatisation for "prity" as Mr P calls it) cannot be the answer. We could not afford the subsidy.

Review

Exotic opulence is so oppressive

Tim Ashley

King Roger

The Proms

KAROL Szymanowski's King Roger is an unsteady parable about humanity's need to come to terms with what D H Lawrence once poetically termed "the dark gods".

Like The Plumed Serpent (coincidentally published in 1926, the year of the opera's premiere) it posits a vision of cultural renewal that sweeps aside the repressive formality of established Western religion and demands acceptance of the irrational forces embodied in the rejected deities of pre-Christian paganism.

The plot derives from Euripides' Bacchae, heavily laced with a combination of theosophy and Nietzsche. The hierarchical structure of Roger's Sicilian court, where Christianity and Islam rub shoulders, is undermined by the appearance of a mysterious shepherd, proclaiming a new god and preaching a doctrine of spiritual, sensual and emotional wilderness.

The shepherd is later identified as Dionysus, though the imagery that surrounds him also links him with the playful, flute-playing Krishna. King and court slowly succumb to his influence, though Szymanowski eventually subverts Euripides' original.

Roger, instead of being physically torn to shreds by Pentheus, accepts the destruction and recreation of his world and ends up, like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, heralding the "new dawn" as the sun rises once more on his universe.

It's lofty, daunting stuff, and it makes for an opera that bites off more than it can chew. Dramatically it is very static and there are times when you are conscious of a disparity between subject matter and score.

Its lushness is unremitting, as if the seductive stranger-god were already present from the off. Szymanowski's evocation of Christianity, all tolling bells and unrelenting chanting, is as exotic as the paganism that supersedes it, which means that the opera's ideological conflict is undermined by its continuous sonic opulence.

Like Lawrence (and also E M Forster and the Mann Brothers, Thomas and Heinrich), the Polish Szymanowski saw Mediterranean sensuality as a corrective to north European emotional chilliness, though the music's heat-drenched torpor, shimmering chromatics and lustroously shifting orchestration seem oppressive rather than liberating by the end.

No one can have doubts about the performance, though, which was lovingly, enthusiastically conducted by Simon Rattle, one of Szymanowski's great champions, and by the Polish Szymanowski saw Mediterranean sensuality as a corrective to north European emotional chilliness, though the music's heat-drenched torpor, shimmering chromatics and lustroously shifting orchestration seem oppressive rather than liberating by the end.

There was great singing, too, with Thomas Hampson in wonderful voice as the anguished King, Elżbieta Szmitka rapturous and radiant as his wife, Rozanna, and Ryszard Minkiewicz making an astonishing sound — unreal, alluring, yet oddly genderless — as the shepherd.

A recording is currently being made with the same team. Buy it when it comes out, though you might need a cold shower at the end of it to recover.

In today's G2: The speed of the new surgery can give us a false sense of security

Diary of an alcoholist: I like Grant wonders: Why are we like this?

Pilot schemes to test splitting benefits between the sexes as DSS seeks to meet changed role of women

Men to lose grip on benefits

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

THE Government is drafting proposals to end the decades-old practice of paying family benefits automatically to fathers.

Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, wants to see an end to a system which treats men as chief earners even if they are not working and do not manage the family budget.

A pilot scheme to be launched shortly will test "benefit splitting", under which part of the total currently received by the man in

a jobless household would be paid to the female partner to reflect the sum designed to support her and her children.

That would leave men with no more than a nominal sum to spend on themselves, while women managed the household budget.

The proposal, which in the jargon of family benefits represents a "wallet-to-purse" shift, would apply to the basic safety net benefits available for families in which neither partner works: income support or income-related job seekers' allowance.

Ms Harman, who as minister for women recently called on every government department to scrutinise all policy

areas to examine their impact on women, is determined to modernise a welfare system established in 1948 in response to the needs of post-war society.

The proposal to split benefits also suits the Government's agenda of encouraging all who are able to work to do so. Paying out-of-work benefits directly to women underlines the thinking that they are now expected to seek employment.

Fifty years ago, William Beveridge made clear that the principle of the welfare state was the support of the seven out of eight married women not in paid employment but fulfilling the vital role of "ensuring the

adequate continuance of the British race".

At present, the state treats women as responsible for money to be spent on children, though not for adult benefits in a two-adult household. Mothers currently claim child benefit and family credit, the benefit for low-income working families.

Pressure to ensure that benefits reflect the changed role of women was responsible for the Government's concession that the new working families tax credit, to replace family credit next April, can be paid to either partner, according to choice.

Early plans to award the credit to the higher earning

partner — usually the man — were dropped after women's groups and the ministers for women pointed to the "purse-to-wallet" effect.

The new benefit-splitting proposals are intended to bring about similar equality for non-working households, though couples will not be obliged to switch to the new system. A pilot scheme will run in tandem with research on how households on benefits spend money, and particularly the way financial responsibilities are shared between men and women.

DSS sources said yesterday: "The current system is based on the assumption that, although both partners in a

couple may have been working, when they are both out of work the man is "the breadwinner". This is about unhelpful assumptions that date back decades."

Sources say that the change would not impose significant extra administrative costs on the already stretched benefits service, since the system is already set up to allow partners to be paid benefits separately.

The first details of benefit-splitting proposals are unveiled today in a DSS document. Women and Social Security. The paper analyses the impact of DSS policies on women, as part of the new requirement applying to all departments.



In a man's world... Anna Ford who outstripped her legendary wine assault on Jonathan Aitken with a wide-ranging attack on male TV colleagues

PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Anna Ford breaks the bad news on 'pathetic' Birt and 'silly old' Sir Robin

John Ezard

CONFESSING "I no longer care about making a mistake", Anna Ford yesterday laid into television's mostly male high and mighty with a verve which far outstripped her legendary wine-hurling assault on Jonathan Aitken.

The newsreader called BBC director general Sir John Birt "pathetic", Sir Robin Day "a silly old fool", and Esther Rantzen "a tough old thing with a

temper". Ms Rantzen's husband Desmond Wilcox had "a terribly bad temper" and Sir David Frost could "take a running jump".

She crowned a spirited interview — eagerly promoted in Radio Times — by declaring: "We have such political correctness in this country it drives me potty and makes me want to take off my clothes and swear very loudly in public."

Eighty-eight, the Six O'Clock News and Radio 4 presenter appeared to have got away with it. In an ad-hoc statement, the BBC

said: "All the events reported took place some time ago. Those that related to the BBC were dealt with at the time."

No official inquiries were expected. She won some senior BBC hearts anew by adding in the interview: "A lot of women find squat, overweight men of 5ft 5in terribly sexy. Even baldness can be attractive."

Ms Ford, aged 54, a widow with two daughters, ranged wider by calling for a ban on "obscene" sexually explicit girls' magazines such as Sugar and More. "Headlines such as 'I came home and found my mum bonking a stranger on the living-room carpet' are so unsavoury. They don't discuss friendship or the joy of simple things."

Of TV, she said: "I sometimes worry about what my daughters [Claire, 16, and Katie, 12] see. The agenda on soaps is so ratings-driven and extreme that 11-year-olds have a clear idea about incest, rape, abortion and most human tragedies but not about happiness."

"No one reads a book, talks about music or says time ago. Those that related to the BBC were dealt with at the time."

Her decision of Sir David Frost and Michael Parkinson was for their conduct as colleagues at TV-am in the

1980s, when the wine assault on Aitken occurred ("I consider that good taste, not bad temper"). Sir David phoned after she was sacked, saying: "Good news. They're not firing me."

Sir Robin Day had told her she was given a TV job only because men wanted to sleep with her. "I pushed him into a rose bush for that. I have explosions which can surprise people."

Al Fayed in clear over safe boxes

Duncan Campbell
Crime Correspondent

MUHAMMAD AL Fayed will not face prosecution over allegations that Harrods employees broke into safe deposit boxes, it was announced yesterday.

None of the seven people arrested will face charges, it was confirmed.

Mr Fayed was arrested in March after voluntarily going to a central London police station to be questioned about allegations made by his business rival, Tiny Rowland. Mr Rowland had claimed that his safe deposit box at Harrods had been broken into and valuable items stolen.

The director of security at Harrods, John McNamara, a former Metropolitan Police officer, was also arrested in March, as were Mark Griffiths, Mr Fayed's personal assistant, and Paul Handley Greaves, his bodyguard. None will face charges.

Scotland Yard has been investigating since last year al-

legations of theft and criminal damage in connection with Mr Rowland's safe deposit box and another belonging to Helga Schwarzschild, who said she had lost heirlooms worth £100,000.

A spokesman for Scotland Yard said yesterday that, following advice from the Crown Prosecution Service, there would be no prosecutions. The statement added that the inquiry had now ended.

Mr Fayed greeted the decision as a "triumph for truth". He blamed his arrest on a vendetta by Mr Rowland, who lost his struggle with Mr Fayed for control of Harrods in 1985.

"The announcement by police is the only outcome we have ever expected," Mr Fayed said. "It is regrettable that it has taken 15 months to reach it but there can be no argument that the police investigation has been anything other than thorough and exhaustive." Allegations of theft had been a "total fabrication", he said.

Prescott hails road revolution

continued from page 1

road users, more regulation and bureaucracy."

For the Liberal Democrats, Matthew Taylor said the paper was "long on words but short on actions. He has failed to take on the big issues of out-of-town shopping and leisure centres. He has failed to change the company car tax system which means gas guzzlers will continue to gain at the expense of public transport users."

The white paper will give local authorities power to raise taxes locally to be spent on local projects. The Local Government Association welcomed the scheme and said it showed the Government trusted local councils.

Ben Howden, director of the Pedestrians' Association, said: "Britain's 50 million pedestrians will thank Mr Prescott for recognising their interests for the first time. The test will be whether and how quickly its warm words are turned into more crossings, better pavements, pedestrian areas and safer routes to school."

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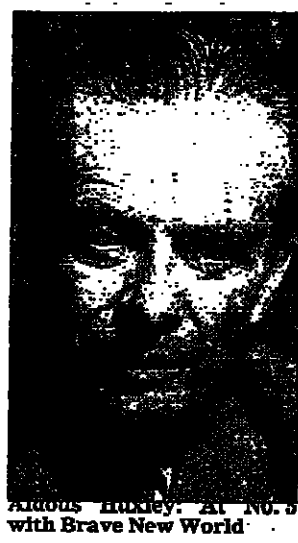
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Sole Irishman James Joyce (above), and Vladimir Nabokov (below), fourth although English was his third language



Voice of America

One hundred best books

1. *Ulysses* James Joyce
2. *The Great Gatsby* F. Scott Fitzgerald
3. *War and Peace* Leo Tolstoy
4. *Anna Karenina* Leo Tolstoy
5. *1984* George Orwell
6. *The Catcher in the Rye* J.D. Salinger
7. *The Hobbit* J.R.R. Tolkien
8. *The Lord of the Rings* J.R.R. Tolkien
9. *The Sound and the Fury* William Faulkner
10. *On the Beach* Nevill Martinson
11. *The Grapes of Wrath* John Steinbeck
12. *The Sun Also Rises* Ernest Hemingway
13. *The Old Man and the Sea* Ernest Hemingway
14. *The Waste Land* T.S. Eliot
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F. Scott Fitzgerald: Second with *The Great Gatsby*

Ulysses tops Americans' best 100 novels

Martin Kettle in Washington finds Random House's list of the century's best fiction has little room for younger writers

BEGUN by many but finished by few, and banned as obscene for most of the inter-war years, James Joyce's *Ulysses* has been voted the finest English-language novel of the 20th century by a poll of mainly American writers.

Joyce's still revolutionary book tops a list of the 100 best novels published in English since 1900. The list was compiled for the New York Modern Library publishing company, a branch of Random House, by literary judges who included Maya Angelou, A.S. Byatt and Gore Vidal.

After *Ulysses* in the top five are F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

The United States perspective is reflected in the fact that 58 of the top 100 titles are by American writers. Of the remaining 42 books, 39 are from Britain and three — all by Joyce — from Ireland. The list contains no novels by writers based in other parts of the English-speaking world.

The top five novels originally tied for first place, and a second vote was necessary to place them in the final order. The board members who took part constitute a formidable constellation of mainly American writers and intellectuals, though few of them are very young. The board consists of Maya Angelou, Daniel Boorstin, A.S. Byatt,

Christopher Cerf, Shelby Foote, Vartan Gregorian, Larry McMurtry, Edmund Morris, John Richardson, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., William Styron and Gore Vidal.

The board consulted many other writers and invited opinions from what a spokesman yesterday called "a lot of different people with relevant knowledge". It was the brainchild of the former Random House president Harold Evans. Random House publishes 59 of the chosen 100 novels, including the first legal US edition of *Ulysses* in 1954.

Asked to defend their selection yesterday, Mr Vidal said he thought the top five were "about right", while Mr Schlesinger said they were "sensible". Mr Foote, while agreeing about *Ulysses* and *The Great Gatsby*, said he had "trouble with the others". Mr Styron said *Ulysses* was "the watershed novel of the 20th century from which all modernism flows".

Like all such lists, this top 100 contains some choices about which there will be fierce dispute. Yesterday Mr Mitchell told the New York Times the list was "typically American" and she believed it should have contained books by Patrick White, Boris Lessing and Mary McCarthy.

Police promise child porn inquiry after brush with campaigner

Ian Traynor in Bonn

CRUSADING Flemish anti-pornography campaigner last night won a promise of a multi-national police investigation into what is believed to be one of the most extensive and violent child pornography rings ever discovered.

Marcel Vervloesen, who uncovered the racket alleged to involve thousands of children — including 18-month-old babies — and up to 300 men across the globe, handed

over his evidence of the porn ring to police after two days of high drama in the Flanders village of Morkhoven. During that time he was arrested and his house was raided.

After a meeting with a Belgian investigating magistrate who promised Mr Vervloesen that the Belgian, Dutch and German police would investigate the paedophilia and child pornography network, Belgian and Dutch police officers met Mr Vervloesen in a car park in the town of Geel. There they took possession of a computer disk containing

9,000 pictures of explicit sexual violence against children. "We gave the stuff to the police because this time they promised to investigate properly, but we didn't give them everything," Mr Vervloesen told the Guardian last night. "I'm going to help the Dutch police in their work."

Mr Vervloesen, aged 45, of the Morkhoven action group which has been investigating child pornography for almost 10 years, has a long history of conflict with the Belgian judicial and police authorities, which are widely reviled in

Belgium because of their bungled investigations into a series of notorious paedophile scandals. Earlier yesterday he was hauled away from his home screaming that he was being illegally arrested.

The police searched his modest family home in Morkhoven but apparently failed to find what they were looking for — child pornography, computer data on international paedophile networks and personal records obtained from two known child porn peddlers. The evidence

obtained by the campaigner centres on the Dutch seaside town of Zandvoort, near Amsterdam.

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Baby murder



Joseph Mackin... Died after Stacey's unsuitability as child minder emerged as her temper flared

'Ideal' carer who hid her dark side

Sarah Hall on the woman who kept her past of prostitution, shoplifting, children in care and depression from social services

WHEN Tony and Corinne Mackin reluctantly opted for a registered child minder for their six-month-old baby Joseph, and his two-year-old sister Samantha, Helen Stacey seemed the ideal choice.

The twice-married mother lived nearby, could work flexible hours and — just five months earlier — had been approved by Norfolk Social Services. She appeared devoted to her own baby, nine-month-old Monique, kept her semi-detached home immaculate and "was very safety conscious".

"She had all the necessary certificates, including first aid. Everything was how it should be," said Mrs Mackin, a 36-year-old auxiliary nurse and former child minder who had been forced back to part-time work by financial necessity.

But, despite the reassuring image, all was not as it should be. The 41-year-old was a former prostitute with four convictions for soliciting and two for shoplifting whose three older children had been taken into care or adopted.

A bureaucratic loophole — caused by social services' failure to check if she had a previous married name — ensured her past went undetected. Had it been revealed, it would have barred her from child minding.

The only child of Ivan and Brenda Green, she was brought up on an estate on the edge of Norwich and became a prostitute in her teens. At 17, she met her first husband, Nick Owen, a gambler and criminal 28 years her senior, in a caravan park restaurant. They married in 1976, when she was 18, and the same year she was convicted for soliciting and he of living off immoral earnings. She spent two days in Holloway prison, north London, and was fined £200.

"It was easy money," recalled her former husband and erstwhile pimp. "She would earn £260 per week."

Owen, with whom she had two children and whom she

divorced in 1983 after separating three years earlier, described the defendant as a once striking woman. "She was a blue-eyed blonde. She was always smart. She always had lots of her own money to spend," he said.

But she had a more secretive, and darker, side. "She was very quiet. She would not let anybody know what she was up to," said Owen. "She would never get into conversations with you" confirmed his sister Denise Olley, aged 54, who babysat for Stacey's elder daughter, now 21. "We never knew her to get angry, but she would stay in the car when we dropped off the baby. And she would just go off when she wanted to."

Such apparent detachment may have been connected to the depressive illnesses which plagued her from her late teens, and which she also failed to reveal to social services.

"She never harmed the baby — she was in perfect shape when social services took her but she would do stuff like this like leave her," said Mrs Olley. When the baby was six months old, she was taken into care after the couple left her in their car as Stacey went shopping and Owen popped into the bookies.

Stacey volunteered her second daughter, now 19, for adoption at birth and she was

fostered, and subsequently adopted by the couple caring for her elder sister. The family now run a hotel in Falmouth, Cornwall. A third daughter, now aged 17, was placed with a private adoption agency at birth. Stacey had separated from Owen by this stage.

From the early 1980s, she began to reinvent herself, becoming a secretary and eventually working her way up to the post of pensions administrator at the Norwich Union. In the late 1980s she met her second husband, John Stacey, aged 46, then a hotelier but now a Norwich Union office worker. The couple set up home in the market town of North Walsham, and began to bring up their daughter, now 23 months old.

It was the birth of this baby, in August 1996, which prompted her to contemplate becoming a child minder. As she explained to Norwich crown court: "My husband had taken a job which did not pay so much. We need the money but I would not want to leave my daughter with anyone else. I decided to find something to do at home."

Her landlady, Sally Body, a former registered child minder, suggested the change of career, having frequently left her son Oliver with her without incident. "He stayed with her once or twice a

month for a couple of years. There was no problem with her looking after Oliver and I would not have left him there if there were," Mrs Body told the court. "Even now," she insisted, she would place him in her friend's care.

Stacey applied to Norfolk Social Services, who, under the Children Act 1989, asked her for two detailed personal references, details of any married names and her maiden name, previous convictions, and medical illnesses.

The mother-of-four omitted the name Owen, failed to mention the convictions, the history of depression or the three older children. Safety checks were carried out on her home, her competence assessed by a day care officer, and a first aid course completed. But her murky past remained hidden.

At first, all went well. From mid March, Stacey began to care for Caroline Hibbs, a two-year-old whose parents were happy with her treatment. "Caroline always came home happy and clean, and I always found her (Stacey) normal, cheerful and relaxed," Tracy Hibbs, the wife of an RAF serviceman, told the court.

But two months into her new profession — on her fifth day of caring for the Mackin children — her unsuitability emerged as her temper flared. During the hearing Stacey emerged as a quietly spoken woman with a pet explanation for everything. The mother who told Tony Mackin his son's death, and insisted the "chubby smiley" baby had been "excited and grizzly" when he was dropped off by his father.

In police interviews, she questioned the competence of the baby's parents in an attempt to shift responsibility and, in court, she tried to shift blame as she insisted: "Knowing what I know, when Mr Mackin came and he (Joseph) was crying, I should have said, 'Sorry, I am not having him'."

The tragedy is that she ever had him in the first place.



Helen Stacey... Lived nearby, could work flexible hours and had been approved by social services

Council 'went further than the official guidelines'

Rory Carroll

NORFOLK county council yesterday urged the rest of the country to follow its tightened-up child minder vetting procedures in the aftermath of the Helen Stacey murder case, but conceded that no system was foolproof.

The council has gone beyond official guidelines by demanding certificates from applicants' previous marriages — a precaution which could have saved five-month-old Joseph Mackin by revealing Stacey's history.

The council relied on information given by the applicant in accordance with official guidelines.

David Wright, the council's social services director, said: "We followed the procedures set down by the Department of Health and did exactly what was required. Unfortunately Mrs Stacey did not give us the full names she had been known by."

As well as marriage certificates, the council will insist on a medical report on an applicant from a general practitioner.

But Mr Wright said the additional checks and improved information technology could never guarantee that such a case could not arise again.

"If somebody still wants to pull the wool over our eyes, I have no doubt they may well get away with it. But we have done as much as we can reasonably do."

He said his county's decision to go above and beyond government guidelines was "sensible for the country as a whole".

Pressure mounted on the Government to follow Norfolk's example and close loopholes which campaigners fear could enable a similar incident to happen.

Sanger, aged 31, whose eight-month-old daughter died after violent shaking by a child minder, since convicted of manslaughter, said it was too easy to become registered.

The lack of a nationwide scheme meant that authorities did not have to adopt any

improvements, he said. "We think unannounced spot checks are needed. You can't always control tempers, which is the core of the problem, but you can pick up where some of them are negligent."

There are 98,000 registered child minders in England and Wales, who provide day care and education for more than 350,000 children.

There is no nationwide register, although child minders have to register with local authorities.

Police also check on the applicant and any other adult in the household.

Social services also have to consider factors such as previous experience and qualifications — but training is not compulsory.

There is no central log recording the number of people struck off, or those not allowed on the list.

However, these apparent loopholes disguise the fact that child minders are more regulated than other professionals in the child care industry.

Gill Haynes, chief executive of the National Childminding Association, pleaded for the public to retain confidence in the profession, saying the Stacey case was extremely rare.

"No system of regulation in any profession can be foolproof, but the standards of registration and inspection for child minding are rigorous," she said.

"It is reassuring that as a result of this case Norfolk have tightened up on their procedures."

The association called for more training, standardised registration and police vigilance.

The Department for Education and Employment, which took over responsibility for child care in April, promised yesterday that calls from MPs and parents for tighter regulation would be incorporated into its consultation process on child care and early care.

"We will be seeking to establish what can be learned from this case and making sure that any such lessons are circulated widely," said a spokeswoman.

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Last day of a young life

THIS is the timetable of the last day in the life of five-month-old Joseph Mackin.

4am: Joseph wakes for his normal feed. Mrs Mackin gives him a bottle and goes back to bed.

5.30am: Mr and Mrs Mackin get up. Mrs Mackin dresses daughter Samantha, now three, while Mr Mackin dresses Joseph.

6.20am: Mrs Mackin leaves for her job as a nursing assistant at

Little Plumstead hospital, Norfolk. "He was kicking about making cooing noises like he usually did," said Mrs Mackin. "He was lying in the cot looking at the mobile."

7am: Mr Mackin drops Joseph and Samantha off at Stacey's house then travels to work at RAF Coltishall. "I passed him to the child minder and he gave her a big smile and I left," he said.

7am to noon: Joseph spends the morning sleeping, playing with a rattle, looking at the fish in the Staceys' fish tank and the flowers in their garden.

8am: Lunch. Stacey said that he ate his "firsts" but could not finish his chocolate pudding. Stacey said that he started to take a turn for the worse, his eyes rolling, his breathing becoming shallow, and starting to

lose control of his head. The prosecution said that it is around this time that he was shaken.

6.15pm: Mr Mackin arrives — more than an hour later than planned. Joseph is "floppy like a rag doll" in his chair and on the point of death. Doctors attempt to revive him but to no avail.

6.20pm: Doctors declare Joseph dead.



Tony and Corinne Mackin arrive at Norwich crown court yesterday to hear the verdict

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB HOWARTH

Lockerbie: the West takes a gamble

Most of the world has lost its taste for punishing Libya. Ian Black reveals how the US and Britain are hoping to regain the whip hand

N EARLY 10 years after the worst act of terrorism in contemporary British history, the decision to agree to the Lockerbie bombing suspects being tried in a neutral venue — expected to be announced later this week — offers the first chance for justice to be done.

It represents a dramatic turning point in the long and exhausting battle of wills between the United States and Britain on the one hand and Colonel Muammar Gaddafi on the other — a battle that began when Libya's leader was blamed for the deadly suitcase bomb placed on a Boeing jet, probably in Malta, just before Christmas 1988, and which brought mayhem and carnage to the Scottish town over which the plane broke up.

For Libyans and many Arabs, Lockerbie has become a byword for American-inspired arrogance, another example of superpower readiness to use the blunt instrument of sanctions, like those imposed on Libya, to bully smaller countries.

For relatives of the 270 victims of Pan-Am flight 103 — American, British and others — it was a personal tragedy. Many had a but given up hope of seeing the two Libyans under suspicion brought to trial.

Britain and the US always insisted that the two, members of the Libyan intelligence service, must face trial either in Scotland or the US, and argued that Libya could not expect justice in these venues were simply disingenuous.

Pressure from the relatives has certainly had some effect in changing the stance of London and Washington. But the key lies in the sense both capitals now have that without some movement on the Western side, Col Gaddafi would never budge.

Lockerbie has been high on the Labour Government's agenda since it took office in May last year, when it ordered a review of the evidence, though so far there has been no public hint from the Foreign Office or elsewhere of the extraordinary turnaround in the case.

Indeed, Libya itself has yet to be to inform of the change of heart by Britain and the US, but there have been preliminary contacts in recent days through the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan.

There must be grave doubts, however, that Col Gaddafi will allow the secret agents to appear in any court. Most Libya-watchers agree that to do so would be to expose his own regime to a charge of state terrorism.

So while there is clearly no guarantee that the suspects will come to court, the British-American agreement to a neutral venue puts the onus squarely on Libya to comply. This — given that international support for the Anglo-American position has been withering away — should make it easier to maintain Libya's isolation if it does not comply.

Few details are known of the precise offer to be made to Tripoli, but it is likely to follow closely one made by two key supporters of Libya — the Arab League and the Organisation of African Unity — which have said Col Gaddafi will accept a court operating under the criminal law and procedure of Scotland.

In place of a jury, the envisaged court would have an international panel of judges presided over by a senior Scottish judge appointed by Tony Blair.

It is understood that the court would sit in The Hague, already home to the International Court of Justice and the Bosnia War Crimes Tribunal. If the two were handed over, and convicted, there would be the question of where they would be imprisoned.

The Britain-US decision will be applauded by many of the Lockerbie relatives, led at the British end by Jim Swire, who lost his daughter, Flora, in the atrocity on December 21, 1988.

Dr Swire asked recently: "What do Britain and America have to lose by agreeing to a neutral-country trial, except perhaps a smidgeon of national pride? Are not justice and truth more important than that?"

Years of pain and frustration have led many of the relatives to believe in complex conspiracy theories about the bombing, variously blaming Iran, Palestinian radicals or Syria, even though the evidence gathered in this country by Dumfries and Galloway Police is said to provide a strong case against the two Libyans.

Indictments against the two agents were issued in November 1991 but Libya has always refused to hand the men over. In 1993 the United Nations imposed an air and arms embargo intended to isolate the North African country until it complied.

The curbs were tightened in 1993 to include a freeze on some Libyan assets abroad and a ban on some types of equipment used in oil terminals and refineries.

But because of the scale of European dependence on Libyan oil the sanctions were not allowed to affect the country's oil exports or oil drilling equipment.



The devastation after a bomb brought down a Pan-Am jumbo jet around the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988. Scottish police believe they have a strong case against two Libyans

Accused of bombing

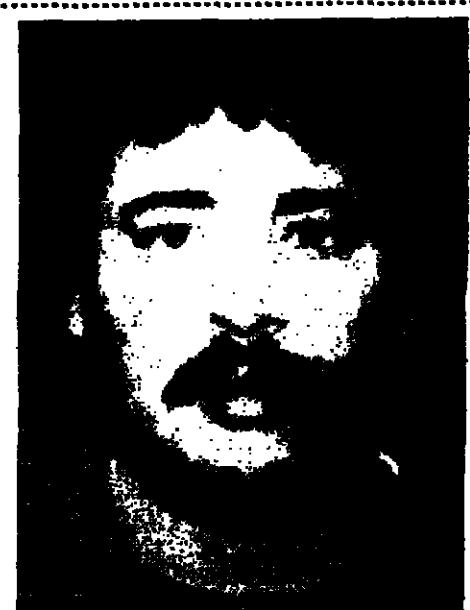
Recently international enthusiasm has waned sharply and the US and Britain have found themselves almost alone as Col Gaddafi has bought friends and influence in Africa with cheap oil deals and outright bribes. The Organisation of African Unity is threatening to cease complying with the sanctions from September this year, unless the UN Security Council agrees to a third-country trial. Last October, South Africa's influential president, Nelson Mandela, visited Libya on his way to and from the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh.

Last week, Egypt's moderate president, Hosni Mubarak — the largest recipient of US aid after Israel — flew to Libya to visit Col Gaddafi after the Libyan leader broke his hip. The UN gave permission on humanitarian grounds, but the message was clear: patience with Libya's punishment was running out.



Abdel Basset al-Megrahi
In December 1988, Mr Megrahi was head of security for Libyan Arab Airlines in Malta. The indictment issued in November 1991 described him as a senior Libyan intelligence official. Believed to be under watch in Tripoli, Mr Megrahi, now aged 46, told a Cairo newspaper last year that his health was poor. And he was worried: "My comrade Amin Fhimah and I recently emerged unscathed from a car accident and we thanked God, because we fear our deaths would be interpreted as an assassination carried out by Libyan officials just to be done with us."

He is accused of having bought the clothes in a Malta store that wound up in the suitcase bomb.



Amin Fhimah
Now aged 42, Mr Fhimah was described as station manager for Libyan Arab Airlines at Luqa airport, Malta. In 1996 he protested his innocence in a television chat show. Like Mr Megrahi, he has consistently denied being an intelligence agent. But both have otherwise avoided making public statements. Mr Fhimah was said to have set up a front company in behalf of Libyan intelligence. According to some reports the two men have already decided they will never surrender for trial in Scotland or the United States, though they are said to be willing to face justice in a third country.

Holes all fixed in Lennon's new wall

Kate Connolly in Prague

IT HAD BEEN a place of pilgrimage for the city's hippies and dissenters under communism, so the unveiling yesterday of the John Winston Lennon wall, renovated by the John Lennon Peace Club, had been keenly anticipated.

Not least by Ray Murphy, from Strawberry Fields in New York, who had spent one and a half hours trying to find it. "I'm a little disappointed they chose today to start repainting it. It's here, but it's not here," he said, looking blankly at a whitewashed wall.

It had all been done to preserve the dissident shrine. The Prague Conservation Society warned that the wall would not live to see another year if it was not reconstructed soon.

An artist from Prague's Academy of Applied Arts, Frantisek Flasar, was commissioned to create his interpretation at the centre of the wall. A night guard was posted at the site to stop doodlers and graffiti artists from making their mark before Mr Flasar's portrait was completed.

The unveiling yesterday of Mr Flasar's sketch, with artists and graffiti writers poised with their brushes and spraycans, was a let-down.

Ondrej Vojacek, aged 17, said he would wait for the crowds to clear before writing his own message: "John Lennon lives forever and for everyone." But, echoing what many said about Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling after its renovation, he added: "It's a shame they couldn't keep it like it was — I think the colours are too bright, but I guess it'll weather."

The artist was unrepentant. "My work is a continuation of the symbol of freedom and John Lennon's unique philosophy," said Mr Flasar.

The wall's subversive status dates back to 1981 when someone scrawled "John Winston Lennon" next to a water pipe along with the dates of his birth and death. The secret police pounced on it as a plot to undermine the state and painted it over. But a picture of his trademark round glasses appeared, to be painted over again. Thus began a decade-long battle between Lennonists and police.

"You could not suppress the huge movement that grew up here after Lennon's death in 1980," said Pepa Nos, vice-president of the peace club. After the fall of Communism the wall became a mecca for tourists. Yesterday, crowds of young people, most of whom were not born when Lennon died, were there to cheer, poised with their brushes. They were later allowed to add their own pictures.

Mr Nos strummed Imagine, I'm a Loser and You've Got To Hide Your Love Away on guitar, wearing a cap of the right-wing Freedom Union.

"This is the strongest symbol of spirituality in Prague," he said.

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KGB spins its Web even in afterlife

James Mack in Moscow

RUSSIA'S secret police would be able to monitor, in real time, every e-mail message and Web page sent or received by Russians under a project, codenamed Sorm, which is alarming the country's growing host of Internet users.

A draft Sorm, being discussed by the country's communications agencies, is truly Orwellian in scope. It would force all providers of Internet services to install a "black box" snooping device in their main computers and build a dedicated information superhighway connecting it with the security agency FSB, formerly the KGB.

Sorm stands for "system for ensuring investigative activity". It seems to have been created by state communications researchers and officials at the behest of the FSB.

The draft project, published by a Russian Website, says the system had to enable the security service to "uplift all information, incoming and outgoing, for individual subscribers of each network".

Internet providers would be obliged to build a high-speed data link to the security service's Internet control room so that FSB operators could access a vast amount of information about any user.

In theory, under Russian law, the FSB would be restrained by the same legal requirements as those covering phone taps or letter-opening, where it must make a formal application to the courts. But Russian Internet users doubt that the agency would be able to resist the temptation to use its secret system to spy on the innocent.

"The installation in an Internet server of a 'black box' over which the server's administrators have absolutely no control creates all sorts of dangers," said Anatoly Le-

vanchuk, an electronic documents consultant who published the Sorm draft.

It would be, he said, "like having the FSB's word of honour that they won't switch on the listening device they've just installed in your apartment or office unless they really need to".

An FSB official told the Guardian yesterday that he could not confirm the existence of Sorm. But a spokesman for the Russian Association of Network Services, an Internet providers group, confirmed that the association had held four meetings to discuss the project's implications.

Russia's looming battle over Internet privacy is part of a wider international struggle between governments and Net users. In the US, the federal government has provoked opposition with a plan to keep copies of all commercial encryption keys in secure depositories, available when required to the FBI, the CIA or the communications intelligence agency, the NSA, to crack codes used by criminals or terrorists.

Unlike Russia's secret police, however, the US government is not demanding Internet providers install a direct data link to CIA headquarters.

In Russia, no one seems sure what the next step will be to move the project from draft plan to reality, a presidential decree or parliamentary law may be required.

Andrei Sibrant, marketing director of Glasnet, a pioneer of low-cost Internet access in Russia, said Russian Internet providers had to comply with new requirements or risk losing operating licences.

One of the main concerns was the Sorm demand that the exclusive FSB data connection be as fast, or faster than, the fastest link between provider and customer. If the project became law as drafted, Mr Sibrant said, Glasnet would be obliged to mark the dawn of the information age by building a costly high-speed optical fibre data link from its offices to secret police headquarters.

"As an employee of a company obliged to obey the terms of its licence, I'm not concerned," he said. "But as a citizen I'm seriously worried."

Many Internet users would respond to Sorm by encrypting e-mail using widely available software, he added. But nothing would stop the FSB building up profiles of users.

"This is information which is supposed to be secret," Mr Sibrant said. "But, as you know, the Russian language has no adequate translation for the word 'privacy'."

Information on Sorm can be found at <http://www.fe.msk.ru/libertarium>

Arts pay price for National Front deals

Jon Henley in Paris

DOZENS of cultural organisations, including theatres, dance festivals and award-winning youth projects, are at risk as France's far-right National Front exacts its price for securing the election in March of four of France's regional council presidents.

The party, whose declared policy is to promote French culture such as traditional dance and medieval poetry at the expense of more popular

modern forms, caused uproar earlier this year when it backed the right-wing presidents of councils in the Bourgogne, Picardie, Languedoc-Roussillon and Rhône-Alpes who would otherwise have lost their seats.

Now its representatives are exercising an effective veto over the councils' 1999 culture budgets, on which many local arts groups depend, by refusing to back funding for any organisation challenging the National Front's views or promoting art forms it deems subversive or multicultural.

"The National Front does not intend to support artists who are politically engaged in any way and who, worst of all, ask for grants from the very people to whom they are politically opposed," said Bruno Mégret, the party's second in command.

In the southern coastal region of Languedoc-Roussillon, the leader of the council's National Front group, Alain Jamet, said it would not "be dictated to by a bunch of cultural trends who then spit into the soup with impunity".

Mr Jamet said he would not support further public funding applications from the regional philharmonic orchestra, the prize-winning Théâtre des Treize-Vents, the National Centre for Choreography, or the Montpellier Dance Festival, all of whose directors have criticised National Front policies.

In Rhône-Alpes, the National Front is attacking successful projects for poor, mainly immigrant youths from depressed suburbs of cities such as Grenoble and Lyon. These include a story-telling centre for children which was praised by the culture ministry, a regional youth theatre group and a professional dance company that teaches hip-hop.

Even major regional cultural events have had budgets cut on the insistence of the National Front. The Lyons Biennale de la Danse, which in 1996 involved more than 200,000 amateur dancers and musicians, has seen its 1999 grant cut by \$20,000.

Jean-Claude Fall, the director of Théâtre des Treize-Vents, which is being sued by National Front councillors for comparing their cultural policies to those of the Nazis, said: "This is censorship of the most blatantly political kind."

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In Rhône-Alpes, the National Front is attacking successful projects for poor

Audiences found home truths in the Teatro Buendía's imaginative reworking of Shakespeare. Now another Prospero has landed at London's Globe. **Tom Gibb** reports from Havana

Characters on the Caribbean island of Another Tempest include Caliban/Machbeth, centre, the bearded Shylock (played by the nephew of 'Che' Guevara) and Miranda, far right. Below, Lady Macbeth/Hamlet's mother shows her clean hands. The play, performed in Spanish, opens at the Globe Theatre tonight and will run until Sunday

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



Bard brings a taste of Utopia to Cuba

ONCE upon a time an idealistic old magician called Prospero set sail to found a new world after being deposed in his own country. But, in a swirl of Caribbean rhythm, the witches and gods of a tropical island brewed up a storm to trap him. Shipwrecked on the island Prospero decided to put his Utopian dreams into practice. "They thought me a crazy old man incapable of governing. But they will see here that my ideas have not died. I have found in this island the perfect place for my experiments," he said. But after a time Prospero started to abuse his power. The play, Another Tempest, ends in tragedy. This particularly Cuban rewrite of Shakespeare's The Tempest, which is presented at The Globe in London this week, has received standing ovations from audiences in Havana. It is an example of how theatre, using allegory and double meaning, is permitted to explore the island's

present predicament in ways closed to other media. "It has to do with the construction of Utopia," says director Flora Lauten, "with the passion and beauty of it, and how men's own devils and demons destroy it." Which is the essence of Cuba since Fidel Castro's revolution. The connection is intended. "We want to make theatre using themes from literary texts which, while apparently distant in time, have to do with the emotions of Cubans today," said Raquel Carrío, who wrote much of the adaptation, which borrows characters from many Shakespeare works. Such aspirations would never be permitted on Cuban television or radio, which have mass audiences and are strictly censored. The theatre group Buendía put on Another Tempest in a tiny adapted church. While it has received critical acclaim for shows in London, Paris, Madrid, Australia, Hong Kong and elsewhere, no reviews have appeared in the Cuban

press. The group spends much of its time travelling. While Another Tempest is in Spanish, the message is carried by the excellence of the dance, mime and music. However, there are signs of increasing acceptance of such expression in Cuba. In a speech this year Fidel Castro described an extremely popular Cuban film, Guanabana, as counter-revolutionary. His brother, Raúl, let it be understood, had seen it while in Rome negotiating the papal visit. The film, made in 1993, is a mild satire on the problems facing contemporary Cuba since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The writers and directors rallied to the film's defence. President Castro apologised in a closed meeting attended by leading figures of Havana's cultural scene. He said he had misunderstood. His speech was not published. Other recent plays in Havana have included a version of Calígula, by Albert Camus, which also deals with the dangers of power. It has the Roman emperor



decreed new tax laws while standing on a carpet made of the Communist Party daily, Gramma. "We are a group of creators," says actor Pablo Guevara — the nephew of perhaps the best known revolutionary idealist of all, Ernesto "Che" Guevara

— who appears as Shylock in Another Tempest. "We don't make revolutions or transform anything. Neither do we offer solutions. But simply because each of us lives in a country going through a very particular process, our daily experiences are inevitably reflected in our plays."

Disease poses new threat to wave survivors

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

SHATTERED, silent and shocked villagers were coaxed from the jungle yesterday as an international rescue effort began to save hundreds of injured survivors of the Papua New Guinea tidal waves. There were fears the death toll could rise to 5,000 and there was little doubt most of a generation of children from three idyllic north coast villages had been lost. Up to 6,000 people could be homeless. A Catholic priest said 70 per cent of the villagers left alive were adults, as most children had been swept away by the 30ft waves that demolished their simple homes along the Sissano Lagoon on Friday night. Father Augustine Kulmana said the young were too small to run away and too weak to climb the coconut trees to safety. "Many children have disappeared. One helicopter pilot said he saw a lot of bodies trapped in the mangroves and they were children," he said. The prime minister of Papua New Guinea, Bill Skate, joined in the search for people still hiding in the steaming jungle in fear of further waves. He said the children who had survived had swallowed a lot of sea water and were hungry. "It's very unhealthy and a lot of them have pneumonia and malaria and it doesn't look very good at the moment."

A team of 100 Australian doctors, nurses and engineers have put up a field hospital at Vuniso, near the disaster zone, and have begun to operate on the injured who are being ferried in by a fleet of helicopters. The Australian prime minister, John Howard, said: "As a close friend, neighbour and helper we will do all we can to help the very unfortunate people of this country whose living standard is low, and they now have visited upon them this terrible, personal disaster." The horror is seen in the hundreds of shallow graves and in the unknown number of bodies still in the lagoon. In these conditions disease is a threat and even minor wounds can become life-threatening infections. In the nearby town of Aitape, 90 people who survived the waves but have since died from their injuries were buried in a mass grave. "The water in the lagoon is so contaminated with dead bodies that most of the fish and crabs are dying," said a provincial rescue official, Dickson Delle. Medical teams from the Australian military have established muster points in the jungle to encourage survivors to leave the area. New Zealand has sent two emergency relief flights and medicines. The Red Cross and other

charities in Australia are sending emergency aid. One of the first appeals was launched by a Melbourne woman whose young son was saved from drowning by local children on the same stretch of coast three years ago. "This is a profound tragedy in our own part of the world," said Australia's foreign minister, Alexander Downer. He pledged that, as Papua New Guinea's former ruler, Australia would do all it took to restore the livelihoods of the local people. Mr Skate declared a state of national disaster after inspecting the devastation caused by the waves, triggered by two undersea earthquakes. "A lot of people have broken skulls, broken legs... it's a very sorry sight," he said. Barefoot survivors have carried the injured to the tiny district hospitals which are now stretched to the limit. "There will be hundreds of injured still to find and each night there will be hundreds dying," said an expatriate businessman, Robert Parer. Many of the villagers thought the noise of the waves on Friday night was an approaching plane and ran to the beach to see it. Most of those who lived through the nightmare ran in the opposite direction. Mr Parer said the survivors did not seem to understand what had happened to them. "They are stunned. They just stare," he said.

Apartheid enforcer faces reckoning

David Beresford reports from Johannesburg on a 'champion' of law and order — and atrocity

SOUTH Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission hopes to shed new light today on the atrocities of the apartheid era when Adriaan Vlok steps into the witness box to recount how he discharged his duties as minister of law and order, and to apply for amnesty. It is difficult, if not impossible, to cap the horrific stories of human depravity already heard by the commission. But the appearance of Vlok is a fitting climax to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's inquiry as it begins to wind up its work. There was an almost obsessive belief among the Afrikaners of the National Party that the country's woes had more to do with a bad press than racism. The steady slide of the land of apartheid to its status as pariah of the Western world was therefore accompanied by a continual search for sufficiently anodyne terminology. The ministry with responsibility for the administration of the black majority mutated famously through the titles of the department of native affairs, Bantu affairs, African affairs and plural affairs, ending up as the department of constitutional development. But for all the paradoxes of mis-rule camouflaged by these attempts to conjure up government concern for the plight of the disenfranchised, none matched the inappropriate characterisation of Vlok as champion of law and order. He has admitted ordering police to blow up the Johannesburg headquarters of the South African Council of Churches, the Johannesburg offices of the country's biggest trade union federation, Cosatu, and various cinemas for showing a film of which he disapproved.

He had responsibility for the police between 1986 and 1994, the final and in many ways ugliest years of the apartheid era. Vlok has already given the commission a taste of the arguments he is likely to use in his defence. Testifying at hearings last year into the role of the state security council in apartheid atrocities, he denied knowledge of police abuses. There will also be a young woman sitting in the audience who has her own tale to tell which, in a way, has more to say than any other about the duplicity and hypocrisy of men like Vlok. In 1989 Shirley Gunn, then a 33-year-old social worker, was subjected to a particularly vicious form of torture: security police playing her tape-recordings of her 16-month-old son, who had been detained with her, screaming. While this was happening Vlok was telling the country she was the "chief suspect" in a case of sabotage and he was publicly naming her to counter "malicious" suggestions that police were unwilling to solve the case. The act of sabotage? Blowing up the Johannesburg headquarters of the South African Council of Churches.



Adriaan Vlok: Claims orders were 'misinterpreted'

10 freed in build-up to Nigerian address

Alex Duval Smith in Lagos

TEN POLITICAL prisoners, jailed in connection with an alleged coup against Nigeria's military regime, were yesterday released by the country's leader, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, in a build-up to his expected late-night announcement of plans for moving towards civilian rule. The freeing of the detainees, who include three journalists and one human

rights campaigner, fits the regime's aim of portraying General Sani Abacha, who died last month as the worst leader Nigeria ever had. The releases of journalists Ben Obi, George Mbah and Kule Ajibade and human rights activist Shehu Musau, came only hours before Gen Abubakar's regime, nationwide television and radio broadcast. The announcement was expected to spell out the new regime's timetable for transition to civilian rule. The

handover process — previously due to be completed on October 1 — was expected to be up to a year and a half. It was also widely believed that Gen Abubakar would disband five political parties set up by Gen Abacha to further his aim of being elected president. Gen Abubakar's regime, closely advised by the former hardline dictator General Ibrahim Babangida, has promised to move the country towards democratic rule. This pledge has been greeted with

enthusiasm by the international community, which is keen to re-establish links with Nigeria. Africa's most populous country has seen investment by all its prominent foreign partners, except France, plummet since Gen Babangida cancelled democratic elections on June 12, 1993. Last night's broadcast was given new urgency by the death last week of Moshood Abiola, the winner of the 1993 election who was jailed by Gen Abacha in 1994. It is be-

lieved Abiola was about to be released when he died. Mr Obi, Mr Mbah and Mr Ajibade of Classic magazine, Tell and The News respectively, and Mr Musau were serving 15-year sentences for allegedly failing to reveal information about a 1996 coup believed to have been invented by Gen Abacha to silence his critics. They and the others released yesterday are among dozens of political prisoners freed since Gen Abubakar came to power on June 8.

News in brief

US heatwave claims 113 lives

TEMPERATURES hit stifling levels again across most of the US yesterday with no end in sight to a heatwave blamed for at least 113 deaths. The mercury hit 33C in Dallas by late morning and was expected to exceed 38C for the fifteenth consecutive day. Texas has suffered 79 deaths, including 43 illegal immigrants from Mexico. At least 22 people have died in Louisiana, nine in Oklahoma and one each in California, Arizona and Missouri. The north-east was expected to be hit next. "It looks like this trend should continue another week," said the National Weather Service. — AP, Dallas

German jailed for nuclear sale

A German businessman was jailed for almost four years yesterday for illegally exporting nuclear weapons equipment to Pakistan. Ernst Piff, aged 67, exported missile parts and processing equipment. He called his actions "careless". — AP. **Island shelled** Saudi Arabia shelled a Yemeni island in the Red Sea and killed three guards in the latest skirmish in the countries' decades-old border dispute. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh said. — AP. **Panda clone plan** Chinese scientists hope to clone a giant panda within five years in an attempt to save the animal from extinction. Xinhua news agency said. Scientists will attempt to produce a panda calf by planting a panda cell into an egg cell from another species. — AP. **Sausage safe** Six German beers, two Greek olive oils and mortadella sausage from Italy were among 12 products to win European Union protection against imitators. They were added to a list of goods whose names can only be used by regional producers. — AP. **Ambulance 'I do'** A jittery American groom who passed out at the altar finished his vows in an ambulance. Rafael Pittman, of Boston, fainted while awaiting his bride, Shelly, who followed him into an ambulance. "One of the paramedics joked they should just get married right there," an emergency services worker said. "Suddenly a minister hops in..." — AP.

Serb forces beat back KLA in battle for town

SERB security forces said they were in full control of the south-west Kosovo town of Malisevo last night despite sporadic sniper fire from pockets of Kosovo Liberation Army guerrillas. The Serbs drove the KLA out of the town centre on Sunday after two days of fighting in which the separatists tried to storm the police station and capture their first town in the five-month conflict. KLA guerrillas near their stronghold of Malisevo, 10 miles north of Oradovac, said fighting was still going on around the town and that the Serbs were using artillery. A Serb security source said: "We could not permit the KLA to take a large urban area under their control and

create an unofficial separatist capital. The town is 37 miles south-west of Pristina. There was no immediate word of the fate of 40 Serbs reported to have been taken hostage there at the weekend, nor official figures for the number of ethnic Albanians killed. Reports ranged from 30 dead to at least 90. — Reuters, Malisevo.

Aid workers quit Kabul on orders of Taliban INTERNATIONAL aid workers pulled out of Afghanistan's war-battered capital yesterday after the Taliban authorities shut their offices and ordered them to move to a complex of abandoned dormitories or leave the city. By last night, about 200 foreigners working for 38 organisations had left Kabul bound for Pakistan, in a convoy of vans and four-wheel drive vehicles. Employees of the United Nations and the International Red Cross were exempt from the order. In eastern Afghanistan, two Afghan employees of UN agencies who were abducted last week in the town of Jalalabad have been found killed, a UN official in Islamabad said. There was no evidence the killings were linked to the men's work, she said. — Agencies in Kabul and Islamabad.

Some People sail around the world for £30 or less

Pitiful wages are just the start of a seafarer's problems. Although most ships are perfectly well run, too many seafarers are trapped in a world of exploitation and abuse. We care for the welfare of seafarers worldwide. Please help. Send a donation to The Missions to Seamen, St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill, London EC4R 2RL. The Missions to Seamen

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

JUST in case Mandy Mandelson should get Chris Smith's job in the imminent reshuffle, I am eager to stifle rumours that he is dangerously obsessed with the content of newspapers. In April, just after his article about Gordon Brown's attempted rapprochement with Mandy appeared in the Sunday Times, Gordon's latest biographer Nick Kochan kept an appointment with Roger Liddle to discuss Ems, and was surprised on arrival to find Oofy Wegg-Prosser also present. Producing three sheets of paper, Oofy explained that Mandy had asked him to read out 32 points of error from the article which must not appear in the book. Gordon was sitting when Mandy entered the room, recited Oofy, whereas he was standing. The piece accused Gordon of wearing a jacket, but he was in shirtsleeves. And furthermore, where Nick had indicated the door to Gordon's office had been opened for him, in truth Mandy opened it himself. On the list went until, 20 minutes later, Oofy concluded and left to take a call on his mobile. Magnificent.

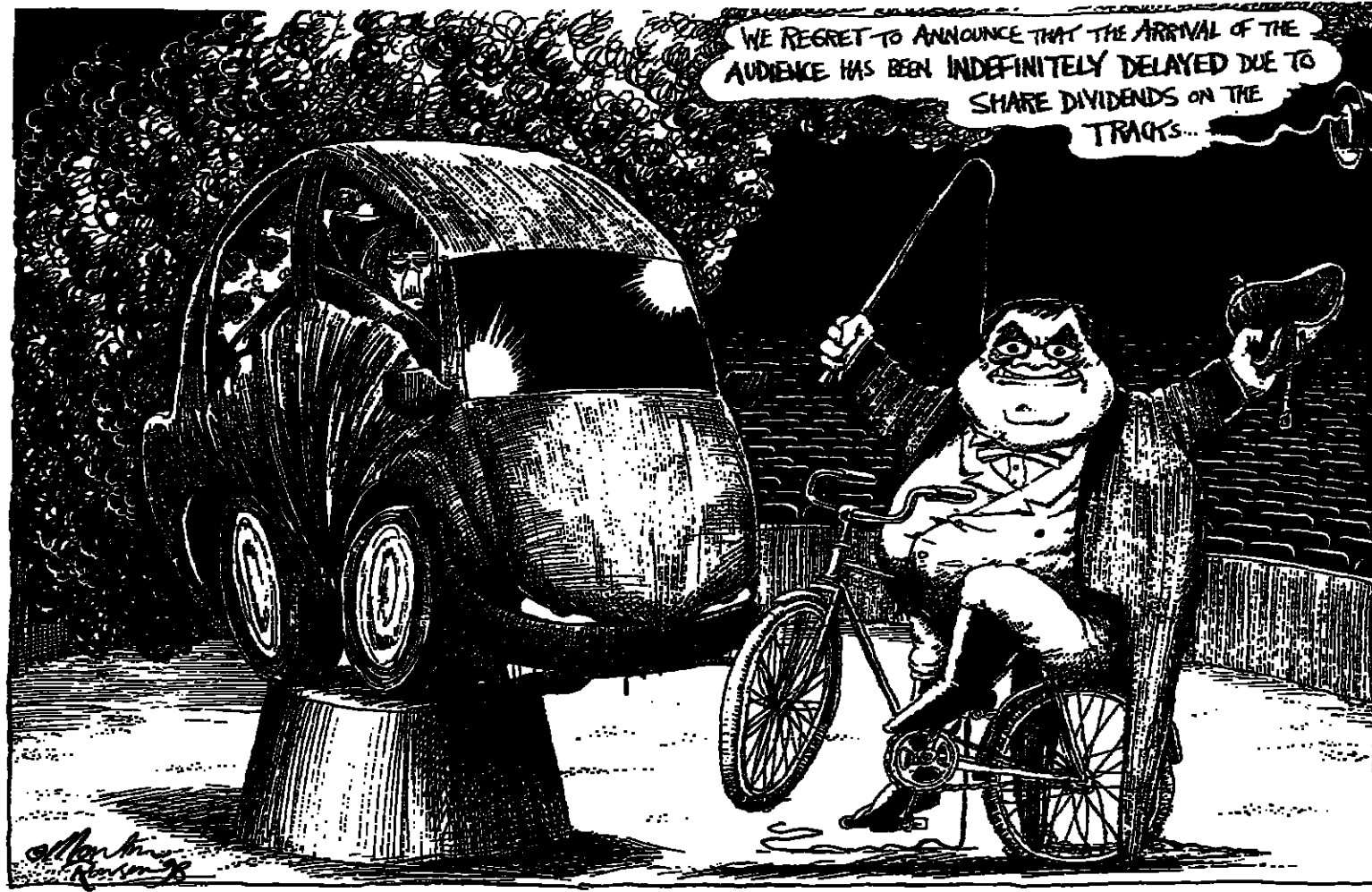
THANKS, meanwhile, to those of you who have completed the sentence "Putting Mandy Mandelson in charge of the media would be like...". The journalist Richard Heller likened it to putting Herod on a child-care committee, but Peter Grant springs to the Biblical king's defence. "Herod," he writes, "never claimed to have a particular rapport with children. The point about Mandy is, he thinks he'd make a great minister of culture. Actually appointing him would be rather like booking Florence Foster Jenkins for the Last Night of the Proms."

IN the Spectator that laughiest of boys Paul Johnson has a howl of stabs at putting down Polly Toynbee over her recent article describing Mandy as the canker at the heart of this government. It would be quite wrong, and even slightly mischievous, to suggest Paul did this to endorse himself to Carla Powell, Mandy's patroness, whom my sane and rational friend so adores. As for his eagerly awaited book on this newspaper, which he promised never to publish in the Autumn, a strange silence enshrouds the project. It is unthinkable that Paul would struggle to find a publisher for a work with such wide appeal, so we assume everything is on schedule.

SUFFERERS from neurological pains are directed to this month's Choice magazine, which has a useful guide to various headache treatments. Particularly impressive is the section on migraines. "One way to tell whether you are suffering a migraine is to shake your head vigorously," "consultant neurologist Dr Joseph Blau is quoted as saying. "If this makes the headache worse, you probably have a migraine." Thanks Doc.

THE loss of power does nothing to blunt John Major's killer instinct. With his memoirs to be published shortly, Mr Major has asked a former close colleague in Cabinet to glance at them, just to make sure they're not too controversial, or even downright rude. This outrageous candour, it seems, amounts to comments such as "X's speech at Conference was perhaps a shade below par", and the ex-minister tells him that if the book is to sell, it needs some spicing up. Perhaps the answer is to ask his elder brother Terry to put it through his typewriter.

RESIDENTS of Greater Manchester will sleep easier to learn that the police have caught a criminal genius. Police magazine reports that, after giving his fingerprints in Farnside nick, the shoplifting suspect seemed interested in the pictures on the wall. "What are those for?" he asked the policewoman. "They are persons who have committed crimes," she told him. "and we need to identify them." He stared at one. "I know this one," said the budding Moriarty. "Who is he?" asked the WPC. "Me," he replied.



The day of the roaming motorist is over, just as soon as the polls close

Hugo Young



SOME tasks belong in the exclusive domain of the politician, and restraining the car is one of them. Like declaring war, but unlike the provision of health care, stopping any car-use depends absolutely on political leadership. Without a law to stop it, or a price to deter it, private motoring will carry on regardless of congestion or public health; and only the politician can pass laws or levy taxes.

On present trends, traffic on US freeways will quadruple by 2010, and the UK performance in and around cities is heading the same way. Plainly the politician has reached the stage where there is no alternative but to act. On the other hand, this is a task he or she especially cringes from addressing. More than welfare, and certainly more than civil liberties, abrogation of car-use terrifies their daylight and daytime policies ever invented. As recently as 1989, the policy solemnly approved by the professional experts at the Transport department, abetted by ministers who went by the names of Channon, Parkinson and Thatcher, said that roads should expand indefinitely to fit the cars whose drivers desired to use them. Such insanity now seems incredible. Experience has proved it to be one of the most futile policies ever invented. Yet moving away from it is, for a government that thinks it knows how to win the next election, a tricky business.

John Prescott's white paper, after all the ferocious pre-spinning, is full of soft soap. Its proposals for the deterrence of the car glide gently into view, before being hurriedly surrounded by innumerable other promises and inducements encourag-

ing drivers to believe that no unpleasantness will occur. Everything will be for the best in the best of all possible integrated systems, in which a perfect world of buses, trains and cars is released from the pinch-points that now render all modes of transport inefficient, and/or unhealthy, and/or dangerous. This is all about choice, the driver is assured. It is not about the deprivation of what he has come to know and love.

A few little words put a tentative shape on ways in which driving might be made more expensive in future. There might be work-place parking taxes, and there could be direct payment for access to cities, if local cities and towns want them. Devolving responsibility and decision is evidently the only way. But the white paper's time-frame seems to be prudently long-term. Nothing will happen fast. Legislative time will be needed for a big fat statute, and this could well be delayed beyond 2000. After that, it will be up to local authorities to propose their plans for congestion taxes and other hits. Even on the assumption that these are likely to be approved, the chances of a single motorist being forced to pay more for using the roads before next engaging with the ballot-box are minimal. Insofar as there was an argument between Mr Prescott and 10 Downing St about the electoral sensitivities of the motorist, Mr Blair has insisted on winning in the short term.

The best one can say for Mr Prescott, and it is far from negligible, is that he has prepared some important ground. He's a deeply serious politician, and transport is a subject in which he immersed

himself as a shadow spokesman. He is fascinated by the problems, torrential in his discourse about them, effortless in the connections he can make between them, and un-intimidated by the extraordinary difficulty of solving them. He has a big mind, with the priceless capacity not to be deflected by minor details.

THIS has brought him important victories in the Whitehall turf-wars. His biggest advance is to secure agreement for the promise that any new taxes on motorists will be ploughed back into transport. Tax-hypothecation, though available only in limited spheres, is becoming government's essential perhaps its only, answer to the public cynicism that decrees all tax-rises to be unacceptable. Though the polls show most people disbelieving the promise, they also show most people wanting it to be made, and willing to pay some of the price required for improving public transport.

If Mr Prescott had been an old-fashioned transport minister, sitting below the cabinet salt, he would never have succeeded in enforcing this shift on the Treasury. Because he also believes in integration, he sets out a more coherent framework than the Tories ever did for different systems to mesh with each other. It's another example, like Gordon Brown's spending review, of the party which believes in state intervention being far from dead. On the other hand, having done badly in cash terms in the spending review, Prescott and his vision must necessarily abate their expectations of the step-leap in public transport that accompanies all the usual arguments against the use of the car: fur-

ther evidence of the tentativeness which, in practice, is destined to underlie the white paper's proclamation of a new deal for transport.

There was an opportunity to do more than this. The public mood, given leadership and a proper approach to equity, is ready for the containment of the car than it has ever been. The Newbury by-pass may be near completion, but the protests against it bit deep into the politicians' understanding of what was any longer possible. In the big picture, Swampy triumphed. The sense that road-building is not the answer now reaches as far as the Road Haulage Association and the RAC. The similar sense has grown that car-drivers, in places where there is the greatest scarcity of space and air, should be made to pay accordingly. There's widespread awareness, too, that in 20 years, universal incredulity will greet the story that any contrary idea was ever entertained.

These are judgments that most politicians share, though not always publicly. It was the post-Thatcher Tories who began to utter squeals of understanding that things could not go on as they were. We are in the boom years of the information age. As electronics companies find new ways to cram more data onto microchips, so the sophistication of their goods continues to grow and grow. Implicit in the marketing of such technology is the assumption that our lives will become better and brighter thanks to such products. For instance, open the pages of Wired magazine, the journal established to track and cheer on the digital revolution, and you will find breathless editorials echoing just this notion. Not since the 1960s has there been such a wholehearted belief in the

Wired and confused

Ekow Eshun



GORDON Moore, co-founder of computer company Intel, coined a maxim in 1965 that came to be known as Moore's Law when he predicted that progressive advances in micro-technology would lead to computers doubling in speed and efficiency every 18 months. His principle still holds true. Like a new registration car that starts to depreciate as soon as it's driven off the dealer's lot, even the fastest, most powerful computer on the market today is doomed to speedy obsolescence by the ceaseless pace of innovation. The spirit of Moore's Law, the sense of a tireless rate of technological change, has come to loom large over our lives.

This autumn, the BBC launches Britain's first digital television and radio service. It is, at present, unclear what this will involve. So much so, in fact, that the corporation's adverts for the service feature a baffled, sceptical Richard Wilson struggling, not with the content of the service, but with the very concept of digital broadcasting itself.

I too can't help noting its approach with a certain anxiety. In principle, the prospect of more channels and sharper picture quality, that will finally banish the phantom figures which normally dance across my screen, is reason to cheer. But I cannot dissociate digital television from any other of the mass of today's technological advances. And because of this, I feel a certain chill at its approach.

All around us, technology is becoming smaller, faster and more powerful. Computers continue to bow to Moore's Law. Mobile phones are evolving into personal communications devices with fax capability and Internet access. New, lightweight digital cameras come equipped with multi-format advanced photo system film. Large, flat-screen plasma televisions are so thin they can be hung on the wall like paintings.

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power of technology as a force of positive progress.

Yet while the advocates of an electronic golden age have their eyes firmly set on the future, the rest of us are living in the imperfect present. And despite the increasing proliferation of information technology, life does not appear to be significantly improving. Rather than making our lives better and simpler, technology tends to make it more complicated. Each new product, from a personal organiser to a fax modem, is designed to help bring a little more order to our life. Collectively though, they breed confusion, chaos and a new set of anxieties. Office workers stay late at night wading through tides of e-mail. Half a dozen people in a restaurant reach for their breast pocket or bag at the anonymous trilling of a mobile phone. The office computer system crashes three times in three days.

It is as though we are running to keep pace with the rate of change, and fearing perhaps that unless we do so it is us, not technology, that will become obsolete. I was at school in the early Eighties when the desktop computer first became a reality. It was commonly said then, before the advent of user-friendly point-and-click interfaces such as Windows made the notion a nonsense, that the pupil who failed to acquire a working knowledge of programming languages such as Basic was doomed to the scrap heap.

IN FACT, survival in the information age often comes from choosing to abuse, not respect, the parameters of technology. The Internet was originally devised as a communications system for the US military before being co-opted by on-line communities eager to explore an unquantifiable broad range of obsessions. Underground music

With each new product, we fear it's us who have become obsolete

forms such as techno and drum evolved when early practitioners queued sounds out of their digital instrumentation that would have astounded the manufacturers of those machines. Indeed, only after the Squidgy tapes did the possibilities for high mischief inherent in a hand-held scanner capable of picking up mobile phone conversations become fully apparent.

Change doesn't happen through design, but rather out of the complex, unpredictable interactions that occur when new products meet people. Advocates of the information age may already see a better tomorrow but the script for the future is still unwritten, and as long as this remains so, then there may be cause for some genuine optimism about what is yet to come.

Ekow Eshun is the editor of Arena magazine

The people trust real policemen. So the Conservatives don't want them ousted by cheap security guards

Best in blue

Norman Fowler

CAN THE Home Secretary really be serious? Last week Ian Blair, the Chief Constable of Surrey, set out his vision — if that is the right word — of how order is to be preserved on our streets in his brave new world.

In his own patch at Woking two local authority patrols, in bright red uniforms marked "Surrey police compliant", would move around the high street. The patrols would be recruited from the welfare to work programme and would carry radios connected to a police officer.

The police officer would be "liaising" at a meeting discussing an anti-truancy campaign.

And what was Mr Straw's response to this bizarre prospect? He said that the plans were "a real possibil-

ity". I very much hope that he is wrong.

For several years I was a director of a private security firm, Group 4. I have always believed that private security companies which meet good professional standards have an important role to play. Nevertheless the Chief Constable's remarks and the Home Secretary's response to them fill me with alarm. Unless we are careful we face the prospect of the progressive withdrawal of the police from our streets and the increasing reliance on non-policemen to patrol. The police will themselves become increasingly remote.

This is precisely the wrong way we should be moving. In my view, the public want more trained and accountable police on the streets, not less. They are the men and women they trust.

Relations between police and the public in Britain can, of course, be improved but they are probably better than in any other European country.

Thirty years ago when the students battled with the CRS in Paris and the Provos fought the police in Amsterdam, peace was pre-

I was a director of Group 4. But the Chief Constable's plan alarms me

served in London. The London police were not seen as remote enemies. This position has not been achieved by accident or overnight. It goes back to the inception of the Metropolitan Police in 1829 — a force formed incidentally

after the collapse of a ramshackle system of private patrols. The new police understood that the respect of the public had to be earned.

This meant trained professionals patrolling the streets. Patrolling was recognised as one of the most sensitive parts of police work. The CID might get the newspaper headlines but the reputation of the police depended on the man or woman on the beat.

The idea that this function can be transferred to organisations such as local authorities drags us back almost 200 years. It relies on the discredited theory that the public will automatically accept the authority of men and women in uniform they wear — be it red or any other colour.

So why does Mr Straw so evidently welcome this debate? The answer is that it

takes attention away from what is now taking place inside the police service. The number of policemen is falling and about to fall further over the next three years.

The police are simply not being given the same prior-

ity as they were under Margaret Thatcher or John Major. We will be lucky if spending on the police over the next three years keeps appreciably ahead of inflation. The consequence of this policy is clear. Already

Sir Norman Fowler MP is the Shadow Home Secretary



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Calming the car

But can Prescott deliver?

JOHN PRESCOTT'S transport white paper — the first for 20 years — is a breath of fresh consensual air after the ideology-driven initiatives of the previous government. The Conservatives' idea of strategy didn't extend much beyond ensuring that as many transport activities as possible (from British Airways to country buses) were privatised as if this would be the cure-all for the nation's infrastructural problems. One of the strengths of Labour's white paper is that there are no magic solutions. The way ahead, after unprecedented consultation, is through a large number of initiatives up and down the country and with very little extra call on Treasury money. The 170-page document contains practical proposals to reduce congestion and pollution and to configure an integrated policy (including shifting freight from road to rail) from the under-invested fragmentation of privatisation.

There are lots of good ideas in the white paper which has won broad approval from business lobbies to the campaigning pressure group, Transport 2000. Charging for company car parking spaces in the inner cities could simultaneously do two things: cut down on unnecessary (and unnecessarily polluting) car journeys to the office while generating the infrastructural funds to make journeys by rail, bus, underground, bicycle or walking more attractive. Business is persuaded that if there have to be extra taxes then hypothecated ones are the

way to do it. Further in the future the Government may introduce electronic traffic tolls for cars entering city centres thereby assuring Mr Prescott of more revenue streams protected from the Chancellor's axe. Since most of his big projects like the rail link to the Channel Tunnel and refurbishment of London's underground are already off-balance sheet (as far as the PSBR is concerned), it is no wonder Mr Prescott emerged unworried from the parsimony of last week's Spending Review.

The white paper has confirmed Labour's manifesto plans for a Strategic Rail Authority to inject long-term thinking into privatisation. This is as welcome as yesterday's agreement between the Highways Agency and Railtrack to integrate road and rail networks. Why on earth wasn't such an obvious thing like this done long ago? Plans to make it safer and more attractive to walk or cycle to school could lessen the attractions of a second car (the biggest growth area). This is the first white paper with a strategy for pedestrians whom it says "are often treated like trespassers in their own towns". It sensibly recognises that central government is the enabler but local authorities are the deliverers of policies such as reclaiming roads, calming traffic and encouraging cyclists. The Jaguar-driving Prescott insists that he is not anti-car. Like the motoring organisations he is swimming with the Zeitgeist by admitting that the car has to be saved from itself to prevent gridlock and to reduce greenhouse gases to within our Kyoto obligations.

But can he do it? The white paper admits that traffic could grow by more than a third over the next 20 years, thanks to the expected growth of households and increasing prosperity. Will yesterday's proposals merely retard that rate of growth or reduce car usage from its present level? Can it be

done without addressing out-of-town shopping centres (an omission from yesterday's document)? The answers to these questions depend on how aggressively and how quickly — the Government implements yesterday's proposals. If Mr Prescott can apply the energy and (unusually for a transport minister) the enthusiasm for the subject he has so far displayed, he may dispel the cynicism that transport integration has so often generated in the past.

Worrying judges

Choose them in public

THE elevation of Sir John Hobhouse and Sir Peter Millett to Britain's highest court — along with the expected appointment of Lord Justice Phillips later this year — is troubling on so many grounds, it is hard to know where to start. For one thing, as law lords these men will decide matters of life and liberty — and yet all three are commercial lawyers with few roots in the field of human rights. Moreover, a Labour Lord Chancellor, Derry Irvine, has managed to replace two moderate judges, Lords Justice Goff and Nolan, with two right-leaning ones — so tilting the court in a new, more illiberal direction. More specifically, Sir Peter Millett has a track record: it was he who maintained the injunction which gagged the Guardian and the Observer during the Spycatcher affair — a notorious low in the recent history of British free speech. Sir Peter's status as the judiciary's leading freemason, who has resisted Jack Straw's threat to force eminent men to disclose their masonic links, is also hardly encouraging. Nor is the fact that all three of the new top places at the bench are — once again — going to middle-aged white men

exactly a sign of a healthy, diverse judiciary. All this matters more now than ever, as Britain absorbs the European Convention on Human Rights. No longer will judges be able to cast themselves as impartial technicians, clinically testing whether measures or actions comply with the law. They will be more like the justices of the United States Supreme Court, making decisions of principle.

Which makes the selection of this be-wigged trio all the more unacceptable. Putting aside the merits of the men involved, the manner of their elevation is an insult in a country which considers itself a democracy. They shall be making decisions which affect all of us — often of greater moment than those made by a humble cabinet minister — and yet they have been chosen in the dark, at the urging of a man who has been elected by nobody. We have no idea what they believe on anything, we are not even allowed to ask them — but they shall sit in judgment upon our rights all the same. Even those who see little of merit in the US must recognise that their method of selecting the highest level of constitutional judge is better than our own: nomination by the executive, public hearings and then ratification by an elected second chamber. Now that our most senior judges are to play a role similar to the US Supreme Court we must insist on nothing less.

Righting the past

It's society versus the courts

A MATURE society should be able to look back on difficult moments and admit that what seemed right may have been wrong. On yesterday's showing, Britain is making some modest but painfully slow progress.

The preliminary enquiry into Bloody Sunday has opened 26 years after 14 men were shot dead by British soldiers in the Bogside. And by a coincidence of the calendar, a new appeal to clear the name of Derek Bentley has also begun before the Court of Appeal: his original trial, conviction and execution took place over 45 years ago.

It would be premature to conclude that we are now wholly converted to an open-minded mood of recapitulation when the past can be faced less defensively. The enquiry into Bloody Sunday was announced in January this year by the Prime Minister after months of intense pressure from Dublin. It was billed at the time as a move to "keep Sinn Féin in the talks": it is certainly hard to imagine any British government authorising it — over bitter opposition from the Ministry of Defence — if the peace process were not at stake.

Derek Bentley's case may seem to give a clearer signal. The establishment of the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which referred the Bentley conviction last November to the Court of Appeal, reflected a widespread unease — across society and the political parties — at the growing number of miscarriages of justice exposed in recent years. But this particular case has always been a glaring one where doubts could be entertained even by Michael Howard — who as home secretary granted Bentley a limited posthumous pardon five years ago.

By another coincidence Myra Hindley was granted legal aid yesterday to appeal against the decision that she must die in prison. Hers is a different issue: there has never been any doubt of her guilt. But it raises a still more difficult question: should the verdict of society prevail over the sentence of the courts? That is one which no government, Tory or Labour, is yet willing even to ask.

Letters to the Editor

The wrong impression

DAVID Pallister's account of the Lawrence affair reveals such a catalogue of bungling on the part of the police that, if it was genuine, it ought to show up in other work of the same police force (July 19). There should now be inquiry into the other activities of the same police force during the past five years. If this does not show up similar incompetence, the case for a racially motivated conspiracy becomes very strong indeed. It does show up similar incompetence, the possibility that the police were both incompetent and racially motivated cannot, of course, be ruled out. Prof Lewis Etkin, Guildford, Surrey.

YOUR survey of toilet brushes (Space, July 10) was attractively laid out, but short on a vital piece of information: how do they perform? We have three of the Alessi brand at £28 each. The head (brush) is detachable so that it can be replaced (very good), but when you rotate the handle, the head remains static, thus cancelling out one vital cleaning movement. T Oag, London.

I WAS horrified to read in your Letters page (July 20) that my wife is dumping me because of what she had read in Julie Burchill's column (July 18). I shall be seeking legal redress forthwith. Peter Davies, Caidy, Wirral.

ALMOST every character who leaves EastEnders, other than in a coffin, goes by taxi. In fact, the square is often thronged with well wishers waving off written-out characters, the taxis screeching to a halt. So how come no one has ever been able to run a successful mini cab business in the square? Robin Corbett, London.

JUDGING by the amount of nudity in every new BBC drama, the wardrobe department is obviously short of funds. As I have no wish to see Jeremy Paxman naked, the licence fee must be increased. William Barrett, London.

WHILST no golf buff, I do rejoice that we are still producing outstanding sportsmen. How heartless of you then to juxtapose a same-size photo of Justin Rose on page 1 (July 18) with the heading "Teacher jailed for affair with schoolboy". One might easily be left with an entirely wrong impression. Dr Adrian Tibbitts, Salisbury, Wilts.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. We regret we cannot acknowledge those not used. The Country Diary is on Page 10

Prescott's bumpy road

JOHN Prescott intends to raise money from motorists and from companies providing parking places etc in order to improve public transport. Rail and most bus services are in private ownership. How can the transport of public funds to private companies be justified? R F Jameson, Dundee.

IN a week I will cycle, catch the bus and drive my shared car to work. It takes over an hour by bus, 30 minutes to cycle and still only 20 minutes by car. On the bus I will squish in with other commuters. The bicycle is a joy unless it is cold or raining. The car offers soothing music, comfort and my choice of company. Public transport should be improved so that I want to use an efficient, inexpensive service. The new measures are no carrot and too much stick. Alex Macfarlane, Brighton.

HOW can Polly Toynbee see these Lycra-clad cyclists who angrily and self-righteously thump the bonnets of cars? Any cyclist will tell you

that instant invisibility is guaranteed the moment foot touches pedal. David Marcor, Gloucester.

WHY did John Prescott wait for the first day of the holidays to call for an end to the school run? Jon Tongue, Manchester.

THERE is so much traffic that parents feel it is not safe, so they drive their children to school. Are the two by any chance related? Trevor Hopper, Brighton.

PRESUME John Prescott's initiative to encourage children and parents to walk to school is part of a get-fit policy. Many will have miles to walk after exercising their right to choose the schools they wish their children to attend. Mike Davis, Southampton.

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precisely the additive aspects of car ownership (lions lying down with the lambs in a mycrae of transport policy, July 20). A key part of the glamour of cars is their power. This, combined with the high degree of safety now designed into them, makes cars pre-eminently suitable for long journeys. Mostly, they are used for quite short journeys for which they are too large and dangerous. Plans to reduce car use should be followed by a more global strategy to replace the car in its present form with small, cheaper, electric vehicles for urban use, together with high speed rail links for inter-city journeys. Mark Ackary, London.

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Something must be done about the Law Lords

HUGO Young is right. Lords Justices Hobhouse and Millett, who they? July 18). The House of Lords will soon take on the role of a constitutional court as a result of the incorporation of the European Human Rights Convention. The appointment of conservative commercial judges by a secret version of "Bug-gins" turn" will no longer do. In South Africa, the establishment of a constitutional court has been accompanied by a judicial service commis-

sion with lay representation which tests candidates for suitability by extensive interviews, often in public. The result is an outstanding group of judges with all the necessary legal skills but possessing at the same time a wide range of practical experience and understanding.

The Government's declared aim of promoting a human rights culture in Britain will not be achieved merely by passing the Human Rights Bill. Other supporting mea-

sures are needed, including the creation of a human rights commission (also present in the South African system) and a judicial appointments commission. Both of these were strongly advocated by Lord Irvine in his chapter in Law Reform For All, published by the Society of Law and Society in 1996. It is a pity the Government has not taken his wise advice. Geoffrey Bindman, Bindman and Partners, London.

The report comments that women in the 15-24 age group are at "greater risk" of domestic violence from partners. "Partners" is not defined, and how many husbands are involved as opposed to transient lovers or boyfriends is not made clear.

Both men and women are on the receiving end of domestic violence, and need our support. For the BMA to trivialise and short-change them in this way helps no one.

In practice, BNFL would have to make no cuts. The impacts of BNFL's operations include rising nuclear pollution

along the coasts of Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark; plutonium levels in the seabed off Sellafield higher than at a Russian test site, and levels of radioactivity in lobsters up to 42 times the European intervention levels for foodstuffs contaminated after a nuclear accident.

Let's hope Labour know better than to take environmental advice from BNFL. Dr Helen Wallace, Greenpeace International

BNFL claims it wants "demanding but achievable" cuts in nuclear waste discharges from Sellafield (Meacher considers closing Sellafield, July 18). Yet the option BNFL is lobbying to be chosen at this week's Osear Convention meeting in Sintra, Portugal, is weaker than existing requirements.

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Not many laughs at Drumcree

READ Simon Hoggart's Diary (The terrible danger of peace breaking out, July 11) while he is in the north. He writes about the Garvaghy Road estate and the Hill of Drumcree. Mr Hoggart's crude flippancy did not amuse me. To describe as "inconveniences" "murders, small pogroms and the like" suggests that the war to stay awake at night to protect their homes from attack. I breakfasted with a family who feared intimidation from both extremist factions. Fear prevails: what may happen when the stand-off seems to be over and the RUC,

army and media have gone? Some festival of fun? Dervla Murphy, Lismore, Ireland.

WHEN university administrators have no vision, science and scholarship wither. The proposals at the Queen's University of Belfast include harsh reductions in geology, semantic studies and ancient Greek language and literature. The university is proposing to deny or diminish access to an understanding of the deeper past.

The offensive against semantic studies is especially deplorable. Queen's has the only non-denominational centre of biblical studies in Northern Ireland.

The damage being done to the substance and spirit of a once fine university should be that dearth of academic statesmanship is not the least of the troubles afflicting Northern Ireland. Prof George L Hindley, Charnock, Oxfordshire.

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I had that Jack Straw in the cab last week, God help us

THE news that private security firms may take over the role of the police (Police patrols to go private July 10) makes me think back some 30 years to a meeting with the Assistant Commissioner of Police at Scotland Yard. I was representing licensed taxi drivers against the danger of unlicensed mini-cabs, amongst whom were the flotsam and jetsam of life. Not having received a reply, I told him: "Don't you realise that if you accept this situation, in years to come they might well allow private security guards to take over the role of the police?"

The stupidity of Surrey's chief constable is normal for those who haven't seen the streets. As for Jack Straw, God help us. Jim Hurst, Wirral.

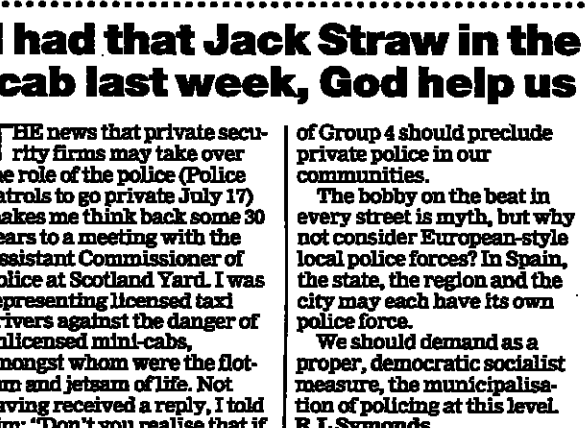
THE incidence of criminality in private security companies, and the visible record

of Group 4 should preclude private police in our communities.

The hobby on the beat in every street is myth, but why not consider European-style local police forces? In Spain, the state, the region and the city may each have its own police force.

We should demand as a proper, democratic socialist measure, the municipalisation of policing at this level. R L Symonds, Mereworth, Kent.

JACK Straw talks to a different public than I do, as a parish councillor. It is a major issue that you never see a policeman on foot. The answer according to Ian Blair is private policing. And would we see these patrols in a Derbyshire village? I doubt it. Most reasonable people would prefer more policemen, and more visible ones. Graham Ullathorne, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.



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Sir James Lighthill

Maths in motion

SIR James Lighthill, former Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge, who has died aged 74 while swimming around the Isle of Sark, was a post-war world leader in theoretical and applied aerodynamics.

He had studied and analysed the pattern of Channel Islands currents. Indeed, he declared when he first swam around Sark in 1973 that it was the best way to see the dark beauty of the island and his family loved. The complexities and interactions of that turbulent stretch of sea characterised many of the aspects of mathematics that had been his lifelong fascination.

Sir James's rise was meteoric. From Winchester College, together with his brilliant friend Freeman Dyson, he won a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge, at 15, which could not be taken up until he was 17 years old. At Cambridge he and Dyson were so far ahead that they attended only postgraduate lectures, gaining firsts in the mathematics tripos in two years. He also fell in love with Nancy Damareg, a Newnham mathematics student who became his wife in 1945.

On graduation, she went to the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. Lighthill sought to follow her but was sent instead to the National Physical Laboratory at Teddington, where, in the aerodynamics division under Sydney Goldstein, he worked on the complex but highly practical mathematics of supersonic flight, in drag reduction and boundary layer control, and in the mathematical design of aeroflows and jet turbine blades.

This intense introduction to the then incomprehensible problems of fluid dynamics, turbulence, acoustic wave interaction and the dramatic non-linear behaviour of many of these effects in the real world, created a bridge between theoretical and applied mathematics which Lighthill expanded into new branches of mathematics — such as biofluid dynamics. His mathematics reach into virtually all studies of movement, from volcanic eruptions, supersonic flight, rocketry and satellite positioning, to the analysis of insect flight and the extraordinary subtleties of fish and microbial propulsion.

Lighthill, who was renowned as much for his energy and sense of fun as for the clarity of his scientific papers, became senior lecturer in mathematics at the Goldsmiths at Manchester University immediately after the war and, in 1950 when only 26, was appointed Beyer professor of applied mathematics.

While at Manchester he studied the problems of jet noise and developed what became known as Lighthill's Law, revealing the sensitive relationship between jet-outlet speed and noise production, and directly encouraging the development of quiet turbofan engines. In 1953, among the youngest of his generation, he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society.

In 1958, with Sir William Cook of Aldermaston and Professor William Hawthorne of Cambridge, Lighthill joined a secret committee under the government chief scientist Sir John Zuckerman to decide whether the term "nuclear credibility" actually meant anything and, if so, how it could be given substance. It was decided that if "deterrence" meant first use of nuclear weapons it was suicidal, that deployment of the British Blue Streak rocket as a silo-based launcher of deterrent nuclear retaliation would be costly and ineffective, inviting a targeted enemy first strike. If there was a way forward, it had to be through air-launched "stand-off" missiles and nuclear submarines.

Clarity of thought and powers of analysis and synthesis

led Lighthill to the highest levels of the national advisory structure. He served, among many, on government advisory committees on technology and mathematics teaching, and until 1985 on the powerful but quiet international committee on natural disaster preparation and reduction (ICSD).

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Stangerup... 'In his professional role he was a walking furnace of passions; as a film-maker he was provocative; in company he was a sweetheart'

Henrik Stangerup

The man who would be difficult

HENRIK Stangerup, who has died aged 60, was perhaps the most original and certainly, as far as his literary establishment was concerned, the most

bohemian of Denmark's literary figures. In his professional role he was a walking furnace of passions; as a film-maker he was provocative; in company he was a sweetheart.

He was as good as any Irishman in effortlessly giving permanent lodgings to ancient grievances — such as Kierkegaard's unscrupulous treatment of the poet Peder Møller in *The Seducer* (1985, translated 1988).

As a film-maker he was equally provocative and unconventional. His works included *Give God A Chance On Sundays* (1971), *Dangerous Kisses* (1972) and, set in contemporary Brazil, *The World Is Flat* (1977). But in company he was a sweetheart. We met by chance in the foyer of a hotel in Lisbon in 1984, where he and other dickie-bowed

delegates of the International Writers Parliament were about to set off to be presented to the president. He suddenly realised that I was the 1960s Parisian mate of his Copenhagen journalist pal, Nils Ufer, an equally bohemian radical. Stangerup had also been in Paris in the 1960s, but Nils had never succeeded in getting us together.

He had bad news: Nils had recently died. Henrik now had only one objective: to frantically make up for the missed years. I had not been invited to dine with the prez. Standing in the crowded foyer, Henrik tore off his bow tie and in full hearing of inferior talents — such as Derida — roared that he had better things to do than to be a swill.

So off we went to dinner... and drink. Stangerup had the broad, open face of a schoolboy; inquiring, ready to be amazed, to believe, an expanse upon which the years had discourteously marked his indiscretions — mostly those associated with liquor. His phlegmy voice also suggested a smoky place — his working room doing research in Brazil for *The Road to Lagoa Santa*

(1981, translated 1984) was in a brothel. He had that innocent, physical exuberance you often find in Danish men, which suggests a desire to demonstrate that they are not Swedes. (Stangerup's family was of Swedish descent.)

Henrik now proceeded to perform an imaginative stunt equal to any of his fiction: he made up his mind immediately what the relationship was about. We were Parisian pals and all talk centred around this assertion, with the phantom of the absent Nils regularly invoked to give his blessing. He kept this up, in meetings and letters, despite that fact that we were never together in Paris. Lisbon yes, London certainly, but Paris never.

There were asides in which Henrik kept me up to scratch on his activities, novels, films, public controversies (I had been shamelessly careless about paying attention to Nils's friend's achievements). But he presented his career carelessly, like a backpacker who dumps his bundle of bizarre travel souvenirs in front of you for examination.

But what a bundle he offered. The first I read was *The Road to Lagoa Santa*, published like his other translations here, by Marion Boyars. This is a reconstruction of the story of the young Danish prize-winning naturalist, Dr P W Lund, who went into the jungles of Brazil in search of fossilised bones with the intention of returning in triumph to Copenhagen. But at the age of 44 he lapsed into a profound depression and never made the triumphant return. It is an astonishing recreation of fevered mentalities in the sweaty cemetery of a rain-forest. Stangerup's incoherent fiction must have forever obliterated the actual truth of that story.

The second was *The Seducer*, another variation on a Stangerup theme of rebels against Danish artistic, religious or political orthodoxy who come to a miserable end. This is the story of a gifted 19th century poet, Peder Møller who offended Kierkegaard, the overbearing seigneur of the Danish literary

establishment. Møller was obliged to go into exile and died in poverty and depravity in France.

Curiously the book which should have spoken most directly to me, *Snake in the Heart* (1979, translated 1986) did not. It is a perfunctory fictionalised account of his own experiences in 1960s Paris. Stangerup's obsessions work more powerfully distilled imaginatively through a historic figure and setting than when he directly reports on himself. The fervency was diluted; the passions appeared curiously shallow, even the language was tamed. But in company there was no taming his good heart. Artists often have a way of only scolding their immediate family with their willing desperation; second-level relationships, such as ours, are often courteously spared. He never told me he had cancer. He was married, and divorced twice, and is survived by a son from his first marriage.

Peter Lennon

Henrik Stangerup, novelist and film-maker; born September 1, 1937; died July 4, 1998

Letters: Martin Seymour-Smith and Alec Robins

John Stevenson writes: I first met Martin Seymour-Smith (*Obituary*, July 7) in 1955 when I was head of Macmillan Reference Books and he had just completed his monumental *Macmillan's Guide to World Literature*. This dense and deftly-written magnum opus reviewed and critically assessed all the literature of the world in all languages. It was clear that he had read nearly all the works cited (and of thousands of them) and he had an opinion, abrasive, funny, sometimes tender, but always honest about all of them and their authors.

When I rather hesitatingly invited this literary colossus to lunch (he rarely came to London), I was surprised to meet not the gigantic presence of my imagination but a slight figure, dark, bearded and coiled like a spring. Martin was surely born to wear the anarchist's hooded cloak and carry the fizzy bomb. "Our initial conversation was rather stilted while he probed my literary likes and dislikes and my ignorance of literature in languages other than English, French or German. However, the liberal application of clear, convincing logic that I was not altogether a lost cause and we enjoyed an uproarious meal. I am sad to think that wonderfully restless mind and rapier-like critical intelligence are stilled."

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

IN OUR profile of David Blunkett, pages 6 and 7, the Saturday Sport, yesterday, is a member of the North Hants Golf Club, in Fleet, and not, as we said in the article, in the South Hants club.

IN A BRIEF on page 21, July 14, headed, Shell fails to beat pollution, we made a number of incorrect statements by accident. We compared actual figures for 1997 with projections for 1998. We were wrong to say that Shell had "missed targets for cutting pollution". The report on which we based that statement concerned data collected in 1997, for which no targets had been set. Apologies for the confusion.

THE CREDITS at the end of an article headed, Sick men of Europe defy pessimistic prognosis, by Andy Robinson, page 19, July 18, were misleading. The article was an extract from a chapter which Mr Robinson contributed to a book, edited by Bernard H. Munn, and Jonathan Michie. The correct title of the book is *The Single European Currency in National Perspective: A Community in Crisis?* It is published by Macmillan.

ON PAGE 7, Travel, July 18, an article on the Pas de Calais, headed Tunnel visions, misspelt Boulogne several times, and in the caption, too (putting in an extra u).

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as

possible. Please quote date and page number. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor by telephoning 0171 239 5555 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Surveys, mail to Readers' Editor, The Guardian, 119, Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. Fax: 0171 239 5997. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

MARSDEN, Betty, wife of the late Dr. James William Marsden, died suddenly on 18th July, 1998, aged 80 years. A much loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Burial at St. Mary's Church, Datchet, on Friday 25th July at 2pm at 2pm at Datchet Crematorium. All friends welcome. Family flowers only. Donations, if desired, to The Great Ormond Street Hospital, 11th Floor, Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3JH. Mrs. Marsden, telephone number 01895 36554.

Births

LYNAGRE, Miss Hazel, was born on Sunday 19th July 1998 at 12.43 am, weighing 8lb 10oz. Parents: Mrs. Lynagre and Mr. John Lynagre. Many congratulations to Liz and John and the new parents, from Mickey, Wendy, 20th June, 1998, to Paula (née Kelly), 2nd July, 2001, Thomas Anthony, David Graham.

TO place your announcement telephone 0171 715 4447 or fax 0171 715 7707 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri.

Birthdays

Prof Heather Angel, wildlife photographer, 57; Dame Joyce Daws, thoracic surgeon, 74; Buchi Emecheta, author and lecturer, 64; Norman Jewison, film director, 72; Ian Judge, theatre director, 55; Gerald Malone, executive editor, *The European*, 48; Dr Jonathan Miller, neuro-psychologist, television, theatre and opera director, 64; Bill Fothergill, actor, 72; David Powell, Rugby League international, 33; Karel Reisz, film director, 72; Janet Reno, US Attorney General, 60; Barry Richards, cricketer, 63; Isaac Stern, violinist, 78; Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), Muslim activist and former rock singer, 49; Robin Williams, actor, 46.

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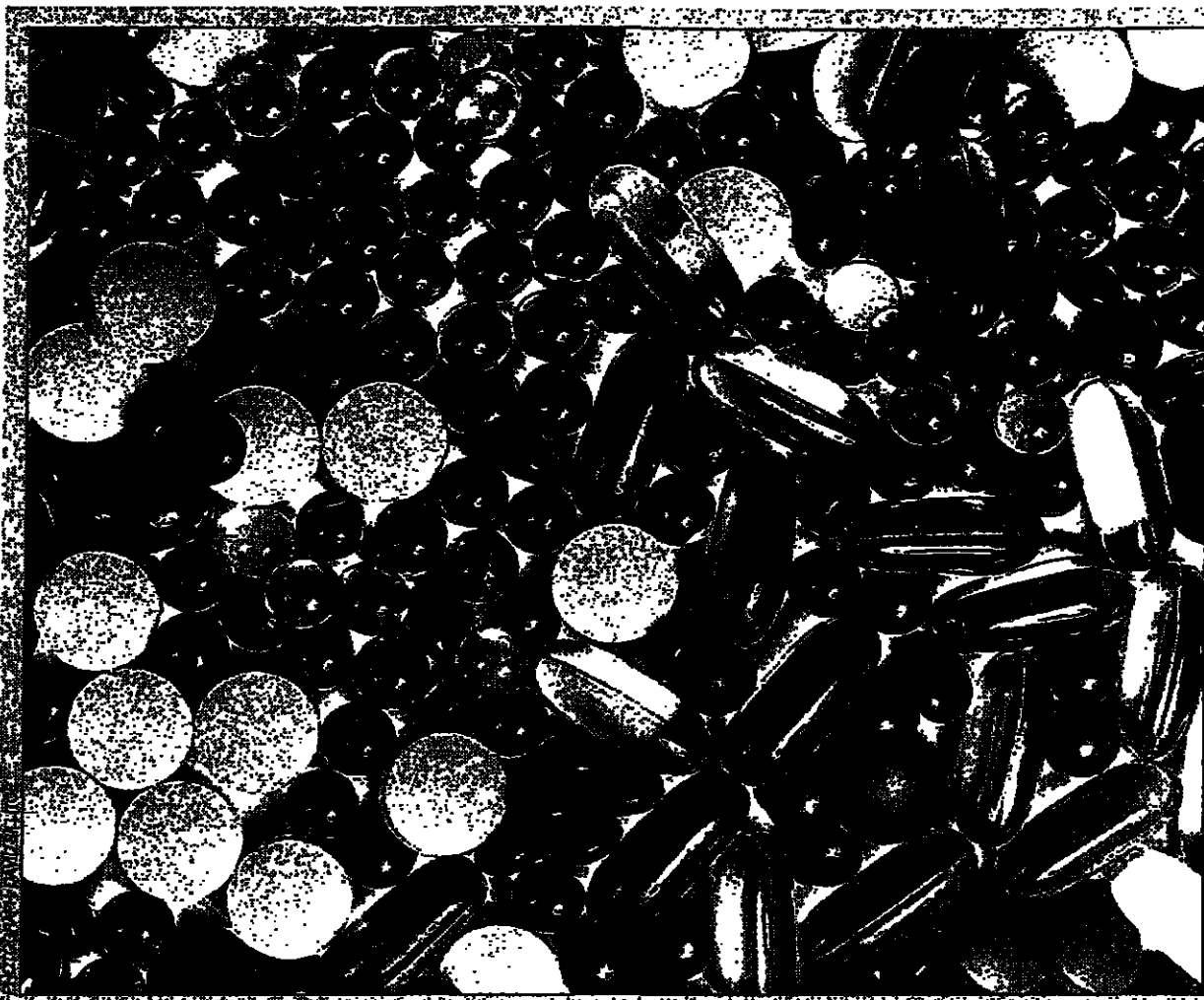
Analysis B6



Prescott's
soft soap
8

Nanny gets her vitamins in a twist

seemed a good idea to the government to impose a limit on the amount of B6 that could be sold over the counter. After all, its own scientific advisers said so. But then all hell broke loose. The truth of the matter is, as Sarah Boseley discovers, it is in the dispute



Money matters

Around 3 million women and one in five men in Britain take vitamin B6 supplements.

UK turnover per year: £240m-£350m. Products containing more than 10mg of B6: £25m. Multi-vitamins inclusive of B6: £225m. Single B6 supplements: £10m.

Restricted sales

Although the Government no longer plans to ban the sale of vitamin B6, the Ministry of Agriculture wants to introduce legislation limiting dosage levels. The general sales maximum dose of 10mg; pharmacies can sell supplements containing 10-40mg; prescription is needed for doses above 50mg.

Limited supply

Products containing B6 that would only be available at the pharmacy or on prescription if new legislation were introduced. Vitamin B6 25-250mg; Children's B Complex 25mg; Full B Complex & Vitamin C 25-100mg; B Complex 20-75mg; Multi-vitamins & Minerals 25mg; Pregnancy Pack 125mg; Super B Complex 75mg.

Vitamin B6

is the umbrella term for three

compounds, pyridoxine, pyridoxamine and pyridoxal-5 phosphate. These enzymes have a wide variety of metabolic functions in the body. Main functions: absorbing protein; helping antibody and red blood cell production; balancing sodium, magnesium and potassium levels; regulating fluids and electrical activity of the nervous system; helping the brain to convert tryptophan to serotonin.

Poisons and minuses
400 B6 products were available as dietary supplements during 1997, according to the Food Advisory Committee. Fifty contained daily doses over 50mg and four had 250mg. High doses are often taken to reverse symptoms of premenstrual syndrome, the menopause, and depression. Good evidence exists that B6 can prevent or reverse isoniazid (used to treat TB) induced neuropathy (disease of the nervous system) and certain forms of anaemia. Committee on Toxicity recognises that very high doses (500mg a day) can cause peripheral neuropathy. The Dalton and Dalton study in 1987 revealed that high doses of the vitamin resulted in muscle weakness and hyperaesthesia (decreased touch sensitivity).

ARE vitamin supplements good for you? Few public rows have been as long, heartfelt and bitter as that over Vitamin B6. A powerful force of health food manufacturers, devotees of complementary medicines and the nanny state lobby feel that their liberties — and their profits — are under attack. For two years or more they have been waging war on the government and its scientific advisers who say that any more than a tiny daily dose of min B6 is dangerous. The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) has recommended an upper limit of 10mg a day should be imposed on the counter sales of B6. Millions of people, mostly women, take far more. At last month, the Committee on Agriculture and the Environment (CAE) has recommended a hard limit of 10mg a day. It dismissed COT's fears, and it of wrongly interpreting the evidence, and added that the Government should withdraw regulations on the 10mg limit. It recommended instead a voluntary limit 10 times as high, at 100mg. There was a telling phrase in the memo submitted to the Agriculture Committee by Consumers for Health Choice (CHC), the main umbrella pro-vitamin B6 lobbying group. "Our supporters demand the right to take responsibility for their own health without the use of pharmaceutical drugs," it said, "and insist on the continued availability through specialist retail outlets of higher dose vitamins, minerals and other safe supplements of their choice." The implication of this is not only that vitamins and minerals are unquestionably and always safe even at high dosages, but that medical drugs are not necessary and may indeed be unsafe. The culture gap could not be wider.

THAT antagonism has led to real hostility from some of the pro-vitamin lobby towards the Government's scientists. It is not just because the scientists are saying something they do not want to hear. The health food lobby feel they have no right to be investigating because they are biased to begin with. Professor Frank Woods of the Department of Medicine at Sheffield University, chairman of COT, has been the subject of particularly virulent attacks on his integrity. The Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy in evidence to the Agriculture Committee, claims that four out of 15 members of COT are financially linked with Glaxo Wellcome, while another six have links with other pharmaceutical companies. "None of these individuals can be

assumed to have any driving interest in patients' finding out that they may be able to reduce their drug intake using diets and nutritional supplements," according to its memo. Writing to the committee on April 6, Professor Woods called this type of attack "a highly spurious allegation, without foundation, which I reject". Many scientists receive funding for their research or some of them act as consultants for the big drug companies. In the absence of larger amounts of government funding for research, they argue, they have no alternative but to accept money from the likes of Glaxo Wellcome, which clearly hopes to profit eventually from their discoveries. And the drug com-

panies try to recruit the best for their research. Professor Woods submitted the list of members' interests to the Agriculture Committee and indeed, Glaxo, Smith, Kline Beecham, Zanes and a whole lot more drug companies did figure. Members declare their interests before every meeting of COT, but links to companies that make medicinal products are irrelevant, it might argue, because its brief was to look at B6 as a food supplement, not as a medicine. Otherwise the manufacturers would have to be dealing with the Medicines Control Agency which requires years of highly expensive research to prove the safety and efficacy of any drug. Why should we do that, asks the health food indus-

try when so many people have taken B6 for so many years and know it works? The argument that what they might observe is a placebo effect is greeted with scorn. But if B6 is a food supplement, it is being sold in much higher doses than the human body needs — namely 1.4mg daily for men and 1.2mg for women. B6 is found in a wide variety of foods, from cereals to milk to potatoes, chicken and beer. A balanced diet provides enough of it for most people in Britain. Those who do not get enough can suffer nerve damage, skin disorders, irritability, depression and anaemia.

So what happens if you get more? At very high levels — the vitamin lobby would put it at 500mg a day — it will cause nerve damage. Typical symptoms are tingling in the fingers, weakness and numbness. It sounds like a minor problem, but could have serious consequences if accidents resulted.

WHAT infuriates those who believe in B6 is that, although COT looked at all the research and dismissed many of the studies that the vitamin lobby call in support of their arguments, its recommendation is largely based on a single study. This controversial research was carried out by Dr Katharina Dalton (the gynaecologist who claims to have discovered PMT) and her son in 1987. They investigated 172 women who attended her PMT clinic. Many complained of neurological symptoms after taking B6 in doses as low as 50mg a day for an average of nearly

three years. Those who stopped had recovered by six months. Three who started taking B6 again complained of symptoms within one month. The vitamin lobby says this study is severely flawed. It was dismissed by the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine in the United States, which has recommended a 100mg limit. But Dr Joe Collier, editor of the Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin and reader and consultant in clinical pharmacology at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, says that flaws do not always invalidate research. "The results were not consistent with other studies and the trial design was weak, but it seems inescapable that with such large numbers, some women will indeed have developed neuropathy at these low doses," he wrote in the British Medical Journal. Which means, he says, that even if all the women did not suffer symptoms at 50mg, if as few as 10 out of 172 did, that has serious implications for the population as a whole.

In France and in Sweden, a limit of 5mg has been proposed for vitamin B6 sold under food law. The Committee on the Safety of Medicines (CSM), which has looked at the medicinal use of B6, chimes with COT. It has suggested a limit of 10mg for B6 as a food supplement, with doses of 11-40mg available from the pharmacist and everything above 50mg available only on prescription from the doctor.

But in this argument, scientific logic gets you nowhere. Each side has its own scientists. Dr Ralph Pike, a member of the vitamin lobby who has studied nutrition, brought together 218 experts as the Vitamin B6 Scientific Task Group.

One of their star witnesses is Dr Alan Gaby from the United States, who has studied B6 for two decades and disputes the Dalton study. On the other side are COT's, the CSM and a host of other acronymed collections of government-appointed scientists who say sufficient evidence of damage is there.

Entrenched positions have been paraded. The vitamin lobby has grown up among those who distrust conventional science and medicine and believe they are being obstructed in their attempts to show the world a better and more natural way to health. "COT are the wrong people to look at this issue," said Andre Hansen of FCS Vitamins, one of the B6 market leaders. "They look at toxic substances. Vitamins are nutrients that have a beneficial effect. They are good, they are positive." This sort of conviction is widespread. Austin Mitchell MP, one of the members of the Agriculture Committee, said at the hearings that he takes massive doses of vitamin C daily, even though most scientists will say the practice leads only to very expensive urine.

THE argument has swung between health and libertarian poles. MPs questioning witnesses wanted to know why the nanny government should restrict our B6 when they will not restrict our alcohol, which undoubtedly does more damage, or salt, which is toxic in high doses. Temperatures have become very short. The MPs' report slammed COT for "stubbornness and defensiveness... following the serious scientific challenges which have been made to its findings".

COT had been "cruel almost to the point of rudeness in responding to articulate and well-argued criticisms from organisations such as the Vitamin B6 Scientific Task Group". It had "tied itself in caustical knots in its efforts to strengthen its own case and discredit its opponents".

The Government has a problem. This is not a report it can ignore, not least because of the huge public response to plans to limit B6 sales. The Ministry of Agriculture is said to have received more letters than it did over BSE. But what happens, ministers are wondering, when the first woman dies in a fire or other accident caused by dropping something because of the numbness in her hands? Is this a nanny too far, or does the Government have a duty to act where it believes it sees a danger?

Sources: (1) Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment; Statement on Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine) Toxicity, June 1997; (2) House of Commons Agriculture Committee, Fifth Report, Vitamin B6, published 25 June 1998; (3) Dalton K, Dalton MJT. Characteristics of pyridoxine overdose neuropathy syndrome. *Acta Neurologica Scandinavica* 1987;75:8-11; (4) Collier, J. Vitamin B6: food or medicine? *BMJ*, 11 July 1998. **Graphics Sources:** MAFF; Agriculture Committee report as above; BMJ; British Nutrition Foundation; University of Oxford chemistry department, <http://www.chem.ox.ac.uk/mom/vitamins/vitaminb6.html>; Graphics: Michael Agar; Research: Jane Crimmon; Matthew Keating. Sarah Boseley is the Guardian's health correspondent.

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FinanceGuardian

Brown sends unions away empty handed



Gordon Brown brushes up his table tennis while at the New Horizon day centre in King's Cross, London, yesterday to hear the views of homeless and at risk young people on policies such as the New Deal for jobs

Notebook

US banks seek new territory



Alex Brummer

AFTER the excitement of the US's mega-banking takeovers, like Travelers-Citibank, it may seem a little odd to be interested in the \$9.5 billion (\$6 billion) takeover by Florida-based SunTrust Banks of Crestar, one of the leading franchisees in the greater Washington area.

However, the merger — which will create America's tenth largest bank with assets of \$48 billion — is significant of a nationwide trend as regional franchises combine in the hope of becoming part of the first transnational US bank.

Horizontal growth, which takes commercial banks across state lines, is not the only way forward. Mellon Bank of Pittsburgh, having seen off the hostile challenge of the Bank of New York earlier this year, appears intent on carving itself a role in fund management. It bought

Founders Asset Management, which has \$12.5 billion in assets. At current market prices Newton, which is about one third owned by founder Stewart Newton, a further third by the Royal Bank of Scotland and the rest by the management, would fetch around \$600 million. By all accounts neither Newton or RBS would be unhappy if the right buyer came along.

In recent times the Royal Bank has shown itself to be a shrewd trader in financial assets so it would not be that surprising if it were looking for an exit. Close to the top of global equity markets. Who knows? RBS may even take advantage of the current boom in US banking assets to dispose of its New England Citicorp subsidiary — before the downturn comes.

23 per cent. The decision by societies like the Nationwide and Bradford & Bingley to reward members for their loyalty with bonuses would appear to be paying off, as the new banks like the Halifax watch market share flowing away and struggle to find fresh business.

But some hard questions also have to be asked about the mutual game. The current upsurge in mortgage lending by the mutuals is being bought at discounts at the height of housing market activity, when traditionally the biggest mistakes are made.

Similarly, the current inflows to deposit accounts held at the mutuals can as easily be reversed if a new national savings product comes on to the market or if a sharp fall in interest rates as a result of recession allowed the plc's which have been holding back at the top of the cycle to re-enter more aggressively.

It is terrific that in both the mortgage and the savings market, the consumer is king as a result of the diversity of players from retail banks like Tesco to new deposit takers like the Prudential. But competition at this stage of the economic cycle has its dangers too, including irresponsibly-made loans and deposit rates, with hidden withdrawal penalties.

On a macro-level, the better news for the authorities is that despite all the hyperactivity by the lenders and deposit-takers, overall monetary growth is starting to ease back with both annual and three-monthly rates on a downward trend.

Moreover, the seasonally adjusted mortgage figures suggest that the housing market is slowing down under the weight of successive increases in interest rates. If the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee is what it purports to be, an authority monitoring monetary trends rather than almost every other aggregate in the economy, then it has good reason to start easing off.

Rail timetable

SOME of the toughest language in John Prescott's white paper is preserved for the railway industry with its unsatisfactory history of poor service, low investment and — in the case of the gains made on the leasing companies — profiteering from privatisation.

Mr Prescott's proposal for dealing with this is to establish a new all-powerful Strategic Railways Authority to ensure the railways develop in a co-ordinated way and in the interests of passengers, rather than the owners.

The enforcer for the SRA will be a Rail Regulator with enhanced powers. Among its first tasks will be to ensure that the leasing companies do not abuse their market power and that Railtrack maintains a high volume of investment.

Such a change in the regulatory regime, which was left too loose at the time of privatisation, is essential. Too important for the public, in fact, not to have a slot in an overcrowded parliamentary timetable.

Loyalty card

THE building societies are continuing to demonstrate that they can compete effectively with the newly-converted banks. New lending was up firmly in June and, despite strong competition from new and aggressive players in the savings market, the remaining societies, led by the Nationwide, are continuing to attract healthy levels of retail deposits.

By all accounts the public has responded to mutual ownership by placing some 43 per cent of new deposits with the building societies in the first quarter of this year, as against the historic share of 17 per cent.

The mutuals have been similarly successful on the lending side, taking some 38 per cent of the mortgage market as against a natural share of 17 per cent.

Blazing mine hits UK coal company

David Gow and Graham Hind

EMBATTLED RJB Miners' owners of the bulk of Britain's remaining deep-coal pits, suffered a serious blow yesterday when miners and managers battled all day to try to save Harworth Colliery in north Nottinghamshire from fire.

Spontaneous combustion broke out in the pit, close to RJB's headquarters, on Saturday.

Most of the 600 miners were unable to work while mine rescue teams tried to seal off the area.

Nell Greatrex, president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, said that it was understood that wooden supports which were being used to shore up the roof after it

had started to move had been caught in the fire.

The company is planning to pump nitrogen underground to smother the fire. A spokesman said last night it would take until tomorrow or Thursday to assess damage to the pit which produces more than one million tonnes of coal a year.

The incident came as RJB confirmed that it has appealed to the European Court in Luxembourg over huge state subsidies paid to German and Spanish coal industries.

It wants the court to overturn recent European Commission approval for subsidies worth \$3 billion alone to German coal companies last year. It claims that these subsidies are helping European producers penetrate the UK market.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SETS			
Australia 2.85	Germany 2.8496	Malaysia 6.729	Singapore 2.74
Austria 20.04	Greece 470.82	Malta 0.6273	S Africa 10.33
Belgium 26.76	Hong Kong 12.36	Netherlands 3.1957	Spain 240.15
Canada 2.37	India 52.77	New Zealand 0.06	Sweden 12.72
Cyprus 0.8386	Ireland 1.1223	Norway 12.04	Switzerland 2.48
Denmark 10.91	Israel 5.39	Portugal 200.51	Turkey 425.900
Finland 5.747	Italy 2.818	Saudi Arabia 6.06	USA 1.5998
France 6.50			

Supplied by Reuters (excluding Japan, Thailand and Indonesia)

Perform for pay, TUC told

Seamus Milne
Labour Editor

TUC leaders emerged empty-handed yesterday from a meeting with Gordon Brown, who told them that all public service pay increases would have to be linked to performance and flexibility. He dismissed appeals for an emergency \$2 billion investment boost to head off recession.

In an uncompromising rebuttal to TUC general secretary John Monks, the Chancellor refused a further meeting with public service unions to discuss how his three-year health and education cash programme might

ease the pay crisis, and told them to address their concerns to spending ministers instead.

Union leaders greeted with alarm Mr Brown's remarks about the need for an extension of performance-related pay throughout the public sector — which went considerably further than last week's suggestions by the Education Secretary, David Blunkett.

The direction of Government thinking on the issue was underscored yesterday when the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, told a conference of the public service union Unison that the NHS pay system was unfair and he would "like to see it changed".

After meeting Mr Brown,

one union leader said: "This means another year of pay restraint. Performance-related pay hasn't worked in the private sector and there's no reason why it should work in the public sector."

Mr Monks said the Chancellor had given the TUC "no encouragement", while TUC president John Edmonds described the Treasury meeting as "unsatisfactory".

The TUC's complaints about damage to the manufacturing economy by high interest rates and its call for some-one with manufacturing experience to be appointed to the Bank of England's monetary policy committee were rejected by the Chancellor.

Mr Brown's spokesman — who was criticised by TUC

leaders for what they saw as hostile briefing over the weekend — emphasised the toughness of the Chancellor's approach and his rejection of additional spending to boost growth.

"This is not the right time or the right approach either for the economy or for the reforms that are necessary in the public services," he said.

Tensions between the Government and unions have been highlighted by the announcement by the Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union that it is holding back \$1 million from the Labour Party in protest against what it perceives to be threats to the future of the Labour-union link.

Ken Jackson, the AEEU's

general secretary, is angry at what he believes are continued moves toward a final Labour breach with the unions.

John Redwood, shadow Trade and Industry Secretary, yesterday seized on the TUC meeting with the Chancellor to claim that "Mr Brown is falling out with the unions in a big way" and to predict "industrial trouble ahead".

Members of the Commons Treasury committee yesterday said the Government had committed a "public relations fraud" in its presentation of last week's new spending plans for the public sector, writes Charlotte Denny. Members of the committee said that by publicising the

cumulative increases to the education and health budgets of \$19 billion and \$21 billion over the next three years, the Government had given the misleading impression that spending in these key areas would be \$40 billion higher by the end of the Parliament.

The Government's own figures showed the cash increase in these budgets is \$17.2 billion by 2001-2002. The \$40 billion is reached by adding up the increases each year over the next three years, using 1998-99 as a base.

The chairman of the committee, Labour MP Giles Radice, described the figures as "triple accounting". But he said the previous government had presented budget increases in the same way.

Confidence at lowest since Blair victory

Charlotte Denny

CONSUMER confidence about the future of the economy has hit its lowest level since Labour came to office last May, according to a new survey which suggests the Government's prolonged honeymoon with the electorate may be fading.

Fears of job losses and a deteriorating economic situation are deterring consumers from making big purchases, according to the July Consumer Confidence Barometer from researcher GfK Great Britain, published yesterday.

Optimism about the economy has dropped sharply since the spring, falling five points in June and three points in July.

"One of the primary worries for consumers is that unemployment levels will rise over the next 12 months," said the report. Nearly 40 per cent of the consumers surveyed believe unemployment will rise over the next year.

Confidence is lowest in the North where the manufacturing recession is already starting to bite into employment levels.

Optimism has also dropped sharply among the middle income group, a key target for Labour strategists. Confidence dropped nine points among the \$14,500 to \$24,999-a-year earners to register a negative reading for the first time since December 1996.

Firms are becoming more pessimistic, according to a separate survey by the Institute of Management, published today. Business leaders' confidence has slipped from a high point of 60 per cent last September to 33 per cent today, its lowest level since December 1996.

The IM survey shows that managers are increasingly worried about their own job security. Nearly a third reported they felt insecure. While they were outweighed by the percentage with no concerns over their future employment, the positive balance has dropped sharply from 47 per cent last quarter to 39 per cent this quarter.

"As business confidence falls, management anxiety rises," said the institute's director, Mary Chapman. "There are clear signs of downturn and business leaders fear this cooling may be the first signal of a recession."

Business flows to mutuals

Rupert Jones

BUILDING societies are continuing to cause the banks pain, with savings inflows and mortgage lending at their highest levels for the year.

As the final votes were being cast on whether Nationwide should convert to a bank, figures showed the mutuals enjoying a stampede of new business.

They attracted \$919 million of savings in June compared to \$704 million in May. This is the highest monthly inflow since October 1997, when societies were deluged with money taken out of institutions which had recently converted to banks.

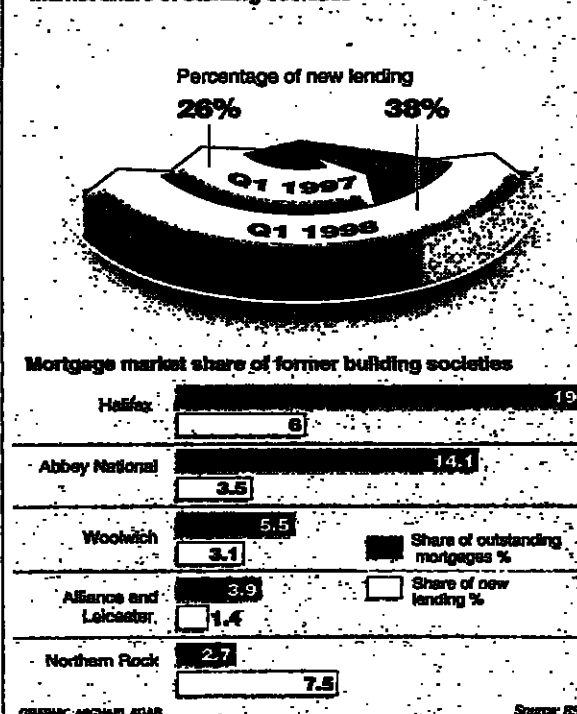
This monthly total is also much higher than the typical amount received during 1996, when the sector was much larger.

On the home loans front, building societies lent a total of \$2,059 million last month compared to \$1,778 million in May, said the Building Societies Association. Net lending, a more accurate reflection of new mortgage activity, was also up — from \$777 million in May to \$804 million in June.

"June was a solid month for building society lending with both net and gross advances at their highest levels this year," said Adrian Coles, director general of the BSA. Seasonally-adjusted figures

The importance of being mutual

Market share of building societies



were relatively low, though, suggesting the housing market was slowing.

Attractive savings rates, nervousness about stock market volatility and a lack of

competition from National Savings had all played a part in swelling the societies' coffers, he said.

The British Bankers' Association, representing the

Loan seekers tempted to take a chance on Barclays

Trying to borrow from a bank has always been a bit of a lottery. Now, one lender has made it a real game, writes Mark Milner

THERE was a time when customers would go to banks cap in hand, to persuade a stern-faced official to stump up a loan.

More recently, competition has tilted the balance

of power towards the customers. Banks have even been forced to offer inducements: pens, calculators — even better terms.

Barclays has taken the process a step further. Until the end of next month,

anyone prepared to spend 30 minutes or so discussing the possibility of taking out a personal loan with Barclays will be given a "What do you dream of?" scratch card. No purchase necessary, and you could win up to \$10,000.

But should a bank really be pandering to the popularity of scratchcards which are, after all, a form of gambling — though in this case the minimum

stake is a modest amount of time?

Industry regulators are silent on the issue. The \$1 million promotion is scarcely a threat to either Barclays' depositors or the integrity of Britain's banking system.

Official criticism on ethical grounds would be pretty tricky. It was, after all, the Government which brought us the joys of the National Lottery and as-

sorted scratch card spin-offs.

Barclays itself has no doubts about its promotion. What is wrong, asked a spokesman, with talking to potential customers about a loan then handing them a scratch card which could provide a prize which means they don't need the loan? "The scratch card competition is not encouraging them to gamble the money they get from the

loan," he said.

To back up the promotion Barclays produced a survey of the things on which people would spend a \$10,000 prize. Top choices ranged from holidays and cars to the family. Rather fewer said they would invest it.

Does the survey match reality? Barclays will have to wait. Up to yesterday no one had won one of the \$10,000 prizes.

هكذا من الاصل

Racing

Swain gets Dettori's Ascot vote

Ron Cox

MICK KINANE bids for a third victory in Saturday's King George VI And Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes at Ascot on Daylami after Frankie Dettori deserted the Eclipse winner in favour of Swain.

Daragh O'Donoghue, who has won Group races for Godolphin on Cape Cross and Fly To The Stars this season, is entrusted with the job of ensuring an even gallop on the third Sealed bin Suroor-trained runner, Happy Valentine.

Central Park, third in the Eclipse, was also left in the \$600,000 King George at the five-day stage, but after saddling Kahl at Ayr yesterday bin Suroor explained: "That is only in case something went wrong with Happy Valentine. I don't think we would run four in the race."

There were no other surprises among the nine acceptors. Silver Patriarch and Romanov stood their ground, and the field is completed by the three-year-olds High-Rise, Royal Anthem and Risk Material.

Perhaps influenced by Swain's fine work on the gallops at Newmarket over the weekend, and certainly by his proven stamina, Dettori has put his faith in last year's King George winner despite Swain's belated run in the Hardwicke Stakes last time.

In a gruelling race in rain-soaked ground, Swain, ridden by John Reid, baffled home from Pilsudski 12 months ago.

Kinane had to settle for second spot last year. But his expertise on the big day was all too evident when he won

his first King George in 1990 on Belmont, at the expense of Steve Causton on the better-fancied Henry Cecil runner, Old Vic, and he was again seen at his best when successful on King's Theatre four years later.

Ladbrokes were the first to react to the Godolphin riding plans, putting Swain in at 9-2 with Daylami on 5-1. High-Rise and Royal Anthem are their 5-2 joint favourites.

But Swain can still be backed at 6-1 with Hill's and Coral, who both go 4-1 Daylami. Royal Anthem is a best-priced 3-1 with Coral.

Other top prices among the leading contenders are 9-1 High-Rise (Totep), 5-1 Silver Patriarch (Ladbrokes) and 10-1 Romanov (Hill's and Totep).

Saeed bin Suroor had no excuse for Rabl, other than the colt may not have stayed the 10 furlongs in soft ground, after the Godolphin runner had finished second to Winter Romance in yesterday's Telford Caledonian Breweries Scottish Classic at Ayr.

Kieren Fallon produced Ed Dunlop's soft-ground specialist with a well-timed run to land the \$20,000 prize as the opposition all struggled to last home.

"He must have easy ground at least," said Bruce Raymond, representing Winter Romance's owner Maktoom Al Maktoom. "He's pretty consistent but we have had to take him abroad a lot to get the ground."

Gary Hind was banned for four days for failing to ride out Lord Of Men, who died of heatstroke on July 29 to August 1 inclusive after the stewards took note that it was the jockey's second offence in 12 months.

Laguna Bay ready to take further journey comfortably in her stride

AT FIRST GLANCE, Laguna Bay's recent record does not offer much encouragement for her prospects in the Marny Bernstein Anniversary Handicap at Bath today, but she deserves a closer look, writes Ron Cox.

Successful over 10 furlongs when trained by Alan Jarvis last season, Laguna Bay appears to have found new reserves of stamina since joining Graham McCombs's yard.

Laguna Bay (4.00) stayed on determinedly to win over hurdles at Market Rasen last month, beating a couple of previous winners

in Going For Broke and Bullfinch, and the step up to two miles on the Flat could be the making of her today.

By contrast, Sihafi (4.30) is a sprinter through and through, and thanks to some clever plying by trainer David Nicholls the five-year-old looks poised to win his fifth consecutive handicap.

Unpenned for his latest success, in an apprenticeship race at Salisbury last Friday, Sihafi actually runs off a 2lb lower mark in the Bernstein Bookmakers' Handicap.

Bath runners and riders

RON COX	TOP FORTH
2.00 Talbot	Red Duffield
2.30 Pay Haggis	Pay Haggis
3.00 Bold King	Flora De Col (nap)
3.30 Highwaysman (nb)	Alphington
4.00 Laguna Bay (nap)	Highwaysman
4.30 Sihafi	Highwaysman

Left-handed track of just over 10m with 41m-in which rises all the way to the finish. Separate enclosure for races over 51 & 51.16 fms. Began: Good. + Denotes blunders. Day: Low numbers indicate in spirits. Seven after 2.30: The Goodwill; 4.30: Sihafi. Unpenned or veered first time: None. Figures in brackets after horse's name denote days since last outing. J. jumps.

2.00 MARNY BERNSTEIN BOOKMAKERS EBF NOVICE STAKES 2YO

4410	Head Hazzard (32)	(9) D Elnor	8-4
0134	Head Hazzard (32)	(9) M Hazzard	8-4
61008	Head Sullivan (13)	R Hazzard	8-4
5410	Top Order (33)	(9) P Cole	8-13
6050	Head Color (6)	B Hazzard	8-12
0	Summary (9)	K McMillan	8-12
001	Ballin Gipper (9)	K Hazzard	8-9
44	Admission (11)	R Hazzard	8-7
5	Thicket (15)	(9) R Hazzard	8-7

Golf

David Davies assesses the hype and hopes surrounding Britain's answer to Tiger Woods - and his earning power as a new pro

Rose takes first step to riches

AT FIRST the comparison sounds far-fetched. Sir Michael Bonallack, secretary of the Royal & Ancient, yesterday compared Justin Rose to the American superstar Tiger Woods. Given that Woods, when he turned professional, did so for a total of \$40 million (\$24.5 million), and that within a few months he had won five events on the US Tour, and that within a year he had won the US Masters, a comparison seems preposterous. Rose had a sensational Open Championship at Royal Birkdale last week but he was joint fourth, not first.

But Sir Michael justified his remarks by pointing out that both had been "boy wonders" and that, whereas Woods was now 22, Rose was still only 17. "The potential for both men," he added, "seems to be unlimited."

"No one of Rose's age has ever been that good in an Open. And remember, we've known about him for a long time: he won an Open qualifier at Scotsraig when he was only 14."

Rose is also now a professional, declaring himself so in his press conference immediately after the Open. Asked if he was going to play in the Dutch Open this week he said "Yes." When asked also if that would be as a profes-

sional or amateur, he said "Professional" and answered the follow-up question of when with the words "Today, this moment." He added: "It's something that's been weighing on my mind. I was going to use this week as a guide and the way it's gone I would be silly not to."

He would indeed. It is difficult to remember when an amateur last made this sort of impact on the game, for Rose was joint leader of the Open during the third round, and to survive the pressures of the final round, to finish joint fourth behind the winner Mark O'Meara, the runner-up Brian Wats and Woods himself is immensely impressive.

What was more impressive, though, was the manner in which he did it. Despite the fact that this was his first Open, and despite his years, he never stopped smiling even when in trouble. Sir Michael, in recognising that, said: "He seems to have a wonderful attitude. He appears to be able to switch off between shots and that's a tremendous advantage. When rounds take as long as they do, it helps if you can relax a little along the way."

"Some professionals," added Sir Michael without naming Colin Montgomerie, "seem to need to behave like the Sphinx during their round and the slightest little thing puts them off. If I had any advice for Justin it would be to retain the demeanour he showed us all this week."

Rose will get nothing like the money showered upon Woods when he turned professional. There are several reasons for this, notably that Woods had a crescendo of a career as an amateur, winning the US Boys' title three times and then the US Amateur three times, the latter a feat not even Bobby Jones could manage.

Woods is also, of course, an African-American, or Cablinasian as he likes to describe himself, meaning a Caucasian-Black-Indian-Asian. His appeal is to all sections of the golfing public as well as large numbers of the non-golfing public willing to buy the products he endorses.

Rose, on the other hand, epitomises WASP. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, and as such his selling power is lessened. But such is the demand for superstars in this day and age that it is entirely probable that someone will take a chance on him actually becoming the next Nick Faldo.

And a chance it is. Rose was in the middle of a fairly modest season in the amateur ranks, losing in the first round of the event he had set his heart on, the Amateur Championship, and not domi-



The glass is full... the game is optimistic about Justin Rose's confidence and prospects

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANCESCO CELINI

nating other events in the way that Faldo, and Sir Michael himself, used to do. To talk of mega-contracts is clearly premature; Rose is only 17 years 11 months old.

Nevertheless he is tall, and will therefore make a good clothes-horse, dark and handsome and will therefore look good in all the corporate situations in which he will find himself. Furthermore there is

the abiding matter of his talent, and the way he coped with some of the difficult situations in which he found himself during Birkdale '98 has led good judges to believe in him.

"Lee Westwood is probably the heir apparent to Faldo," said Sir Michael, "but he is almost an old man compared to Justin. There were three generations of English talent

represented in the Open this year in Faldo, Westwood and Rose. There were also 15-20,000 youngsters, under 16, whom we let in free and who will have seen what Justin achieved and will go back home and get the clubs out. Maybe we'll find another Rose quite quickly."

The Royal & Ancient, which repeatedly professes to be on the lookout for more Open ven-

ues, has reluctantly ruled out Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland. The Open dates always clash with the July 12 holiday season and the area is booked out for years ahead. But the R&A intends to take a look at Saunton, in Devon, which undoubtedly has a good enough course but may not possess the infrastructure to host an event of the size the Open has become.



Rising fast... Rose has 'unlimited potential'

Rugby League

'Unqualified' Schofield loses coach's job

Andy Wilson on how the Giants were not too big to admit a basic oversight

GARRY SCHOFIELD is no longer the coach of Huddersfield. The club say they have just discovered that he does not possess the necessary coaching qualifications. This highly unusual development came with a furious denial of reports that Schofield had been sacked.

Les Coulter, the Huddersfield chief executive, issued his second statement of the day, which insisted: "Garry has not been sacked. He is still an important full-time member of the club. If he was properly qualified he would still be the head coach."

"Super League rules are clear. Coaches must have a level III in coaching, and Garry does not have it. He has assured us that he will give us 110 per cent. He intends to get his coaching qualifications as soon as possible."

It has taken Huddersfield eight months to spot the gap in Schofield's CV, having appointed him last November when they were promoted from the First Division to the Super League. Whether they would have acted the same had Schofield steered the team to more than two wins from 12 matches this season is a moot point.

It was the former Great Britain captain's first coaching job. He tried to rectify his lack of experience in a two-week crash course with the Brisbane Broncos, but the Huddersfield directors have learned to their cost that outstanding players do not automatically make outstanding coaches.

Twice he has felt forced to pull on the boots, having indicated at the start of the season that he did not want to play, and he has become involved in a fight each time. However, his cause was not helped by the fact that Huddersfield were accepted to the Super League only on the basis that they retained a First Division share of the game's Sky money: about £450,000 a year compared with £900,000 for the other 11 Super League clubs.

Phil Veivers, the Australian player who has been acting as Schofield's assistant coach and has his level III coaching badge, conducted a training session yesterday, with Schofield returning to the ranks.

Huddersfield hope to have a new man in place - having checked, presumably, that he is qualified - before Friday night's fixture against Hull in Gateshead, when Schofield is expected to be a substitute.

The Great Britain coach Andy Goodway is the leading candidate to replace his former international team-mate. His three-year contract with the Rugby Football League as national coach would not preclude him taking a club job but he is currently assistant to John Moore at Wigan. "I'm happy at Wigan," he said yesterday, "but I would have to listen to anything Huddersfield had to say."

After numerous frustrations trying to keep the cash-strapped Oldham Bears in the Super League, Goodway would need convincing that Huddersfield's directors would provide money for new players. The signs are that their millionaire chairman Ken Davy is ready to give that guarantee as the Giants are expected to receive an equal share of the new Sky TV deal next season.

Whitehaven's New Zealand coach Stan Martin has resigned after three years at the First Division club.



Schofield... 'not sacked'

Athletics

Clubs go to polls on Moorcroft plan

DAVID MOORCROFT has put his reputation on the line by finalising a plan for the reorganisation of British athletics and by issuing a warning that he will walk away unless he receives the backing of the clubs.

He announced his initiative as chief executive of UK Athletics 98 in Gateshead yesterday after striving to find an acceptable formula since the British Athletic Federation became insolvent in October.

"It's not a fair cop, but the reality is that I have nothing better to come up with," he said. "If the clubs do not vote yes, then I shall stand aside and let someone else have a go."

Britain's 1,700 clubs will be sent details of the proposed structure for the new body early next month and have until September 30 to register their votes.

If the clubs accept the proposals, agreed by a steering committee headed by Moorcroft, it is hoped to have Athletics UK up and running by January 1.

The new body would be more streamlined than its predecessor. Policy and support teams are envisaged as having no more than 10 members, instead of sometimes twice that number under the former governing body, which called in the administrators with debts of nearly £2 million. The BAF Council itself had 64 members.

"I would hope at least 90 per cent of clubs will make the effort to decide the future," said Moorcroft, who has consulted widely in the past six months at workshops and seminars. "It will be a hard challenge getting a lot of clubs to vote and I expect there will be apathy from the smaller ones. But I am confident there will be an overwhelming yes vote."

Boxing

Nearby spearheads new ITV coverage

John Rawling

MILLIONS of armchair fans denied worthwhile terrestrial television coverage for more than two years will be delighted by the return of the sport to the ITV network tonight when the Liverpoolian Sba Neary fights in Widnes.

The fact that he is defending his World Boxing Union title, which many would suggest is worth less than a row of beans, is irrelevant. He is the best light-welterweight in the country and faces a worthy opponent in the lanky South African southpaw Naas Scheepers.

If the hard-hitting, unde-

feated Neary delivers the anticipated overwhelming victory he will deposit a sizeable wind in his bank account and will have done the sport a colossal favour.

Claude Abrams, editor of Boxing News, says he has had hundreds of letters over the past years imploring ITV and BBC to deliver the sport to a nationwide audience.

"The decision to put the sport back on ITV, for the whole country, is a lifeline," Abrams argues. "Without terrestrial television I fear very much that boxing would eventually become a minority sport. It has been proved that Sky are unable to create superstars."

Michael Watson's brain in-

jury in his fight against Chris Eubank in September 1991 shook ITV's commitment to the sport and the similar injury inflicted on Gerald McClellan by Nigel Benn in February 1996 in front of a live TV audience of more than 13 million increased the pressure on the networks.

Although BBC Radio continues to recognise the importance of boxing at the core of its live sports coverage, with a tradition dating back six decades, BBC TV was forced to step aside by economic reality.

"It is fair to say there came a point where coverage of boxing became prohibitively expensive to BBC TV," says the head of sport, Bob Shennan. "But we would never

draw a complete line. If the fans are viable it would be part of our public service remit to show it."

All of which makes Brian Barwick's decision, as head of ITV Sport, to invest in Neary all the more laudable. His financial commitment has not been disclosed but it is safe to assume it is a tiny fraction of what Sky invests, principally in the promotions of Frank Warren.

Barwick freely admits that Neary-Scheepers is a toe-in-the-water exercise and a union of scounders. Barwick, a Liverpoolian, goes back a long way with tonight's promoter John Hyland.

Powerful programme-schedulers will be waiting to

bury the two men's ambitions if the promotion is a flop or if the audience is poor. But the familiar voice of the 72-year-old Reg Gutteridge will be heard once more, now in harness with Steve Collins, the articulate former World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight champion.

Hyland said last night: "This is all a breath of fresh air to boxing. Young kids will be watching and the old folks who can't afford a Sky dish. I know our promotion team is under trial, but we can deliver."

Hyland deserves any success that comes his way, and the 30-year-old Neary, his big draw-card, should win inside eight rounds.

Sport in brief

Boxing

The unbeaten Coventry featherweight Richard Evatt was forced to pull out of last night's British title eliminator against Leicester's Kelvin McKenzie at the Aston Villa Leisure Centre after he failed a routine brain scan. His manager Barry Hearn is planning to lodge an appeal with the British Boxing Board of Control. The 24-year-old Evatt is unbeaten in 13 fights, 11 inside the distance.

Ice Hockey

The Superleague yesterday unveiled its first major sponsor in the run-up to its third season, writes Vic Batchelder. The sponsorship by Sekonda, one of Britain's top watch brands, is said to be worth more than £1 million and will initially run for three years. It includes the end-of-season play-offs. Meanwhile, Nottingham Panthers have signed the Canadian defenceman Roy Mitchell, who played for their Superleague rivals Newcastle last season.

Basketball

Worthing Bears have signed James Doyle, a 6ft 10in American centre, and Sammy Salter, an Englishman who plays at point or shooting guard. They are recruits from trials held by Worthing's joint owner Bob Wood in Salt Lake City.

Badminton

England's coach Asger Madsen will stand down after September's Commonwealth Games to take a post with the German Badminton Federation. Madsen has transformed the training structure of England's elite squad but there have been differences of opinion between players and coaches.

Athletics

The swimmer Nicola Jackson has won Britain's only gold medals at the world Youth Games in Moscow. Jackson, from North Yorkshire, won the 100 and 200 metres freestyle. Southend's Nathalie Brown finished second in the 800m individual medley.

Rugby Union

Baister blocks Welsh clubs

Ian Mallin

BRIAN BAISTER yesterday made his first move as the English game's new leading administrator. Baister, who on Sunday defeated Cliff Brittle for the chairmanship of the Rugby Football Union's management board, has put a block on the unofficial participation of the Welsh clubs Swansea and Cardiff in England's Premiership.

Baister was reacting to speculation that the two Welsh clubs could organise friendly matches against the 14 Premiership sides on a home-and-away basis, which would inevitably lead to league tables being published.

"We expect to see a fixture list for all Premiership games available for approval this week and anticipate that this will be in line with the structured season agreed between

the clubs and the RFU," he said.

The new chairman, meanwhile, pledged his support for the national coach Clive Woodward despite this summer's disastrous England tour of the southern hemisphere and despite the fact that Woodward had allied himself to Brittle. There had been suggestions in the build-up to Sunday's RFU annual general meeting that Woodward's job might be jeopardised if Brittle lost.

Woodward has returned home with his understrength team savaged by four Test defeats by Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The results, which included a record 76-0 trouncing by the Wallabies, have embarrassed Woodward, and Woodward was scathing about the organisation of the tour.

But the pair will meet this week and Baister acknowledged Woodward's key role in

the next 15 months until the World Cup. He said: "I have only admiration for the way Clive wants England to play an exciting style of rugby. Clive is the coach for the future and has a great deal to offer England."

Baister also said he would welcome back Fran Cotton, who resigned as vice-chairman of the board when Brittle was sidelined in April.

"Fran has given a great deal to English rugby and it would be a waste if he did not continue to throw in his lot with the English game," Baister said. "And I don't want to hear the last of Cliff. I hope we can get together, even though he has now no formal position."

Worcester, newly promoted to Premiership Two, have signed the Swiss international wing Lee Feurter from Harrogate. The 27-year-old Feurter has also represented South African schools.

Basketball

Tributes after court-side death of 'fit' England cap

Rob Dogdale

A BENEFIT game is being planned for Adrian Cummings, the 25-year-old former England international who died of suspected heart failure after a practice game on Friday night.

Cummings asked to take a rest from the game and then lapsed into unconsciousness. He was briefly revived in the ambulance on the way to hospital but was pronounced dead shortly after arrival.

There will be an autopsy but Cummings had been suffering from black-outs, the latest two weeks before his death. He was cleared to resume playing after an examination by his GP.

The benefit is expected to be at Crystal Palace on Saturday night, with proceeds going to his family and girlfriend, who is three months pregnant. Cummings, an athletic small

forward, was born in Hackney and played 285 league games for Crystal Palace, Kingston, Guildford, London Leopards and Thames Valley, averaging 71 points a game.

In 1991 he returned to the University of Tennessee Martin in the United States and was picked up by Kings-ton. "For pure physical, athletic ability I don't think there's been anyone like him in this country," said his coach there, Kevin Cadle.

Two years later he won the first of his eight England caps and last season he moved to Thames Valley and joined the starting line-up midway through the campaign.

"He led by example and never complained," said his captain, Tony Holley. "He always went with the flow and did his job. He would have been the last player in England you would expect to have a heart attack. When it came to fitness, A C was No. 1."

May makes hay as Derbyshire draw, page 13
Arsenal book their Wembley tickets, page 14

Cipollini bows out of the Tour, page 14
Schofield loses his coaching job, page 15

SportsGuardian

Athletics phenomenon lives up to the hype

Jones reaches cloud nine

THE woman expected to dominate the 2000 Olympics justified her mantle as the outstanding track-and-field athlete of her generation on the opening day of the Goodwill Games in New York.

Marion Jones, the 22-year-old American who hopes to win five golds in Sydney, eased to her ninth consecutive victory of the year, winning the 100 metres in 10.90sec.

The world 100m champion overcame a false start to win by three metres and 0.19 from the world silver medalist Zhanna Pintusevich of Ukraine. The American Inger Miller was third and Jamaica's Merlene Ottey fourth.

"It wasn't a fast time but I'm happy for the victory," said Jones, who raced into a headwind. "I hope I can run faster than my personal best of 10.71 this year."



Gold rush... Marion Jones celebrates winning the 100 metres as Zhanna Pintusevich, right, and Merlene Ottey trail in her wake

GARY HERSHORN

Gangly youth upstages the King's jet set



Laura Thompson

THE King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes, which will be run at Ascot on Saturday, is as glamorous as racing gets. It is our Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, the chance for horses of all ages to meet over the classic mile-and-a-half distance, which since its inception in 1961 has been as richly stellar as a Hollywood premiere.

Most of the greats have turned up for it, and most have won it: Nijinsky, Mill Reef, Brigadier Gerard, Grandy, The Minstrel, Troy, Shergar, Dancing Brave, Nashwan, Generous and Lamartini. They have all come out in their gorgeous summer coats, looking as good as anything on earth can look, seeking also to confirm the superiority that already gleams in their eyes. Indeed, moments in racing do not come much better than the paddock before the King George. You think all thoroughbreds are beautiful until you see these horses; they seem to cover the ground in a different, almost effortless manner, creating a sense of awe with each extravagant and elastic stride.

As surely as great actors when they walk out on stage they bring with them an atmosphere to which no one could fail to respond. If Derby horses enter the paddock shimmering with potential, these horses emerge with existing reputations and achievements, real pasts. You just know that they recognise that they are the business.

This year, for example, the race has attracted the Epsom Derby winner, High-Rise; the Eclipse winner, Daylam; the Coronation Cup winner and 1997 St Leger winner, Silver Patriarch; the Jockey Club Stakes winner and 1997 Derby third, Romanov; and last year's King George winner, Swain. A fair old field, as even the "Où sont les King Georges d'antan?" brigade will agree. And so who, among this elite band, is considered the likely winner?

Well, wouldn't you know, none of them. Currently the 9-4 favourite is a three-year-old named Royal Anthem, who is running in only his fourth race. Unbeaten, unraced as a two-year-old, unknown

beyond the world of the Newmarket cognoscenti, he came to prominence no more than a month ago in the Group Two King Edward VII Stakes at Royal Ascot.

This, it has to be said, was as sweet a victory as you will see, but there were no horses like Swain or Daylam in that race. And, in the paddock beforehand, what a big baby Royal Anthem still looked: a beauty, of course, whose proportions held the promise of greatness, but whose gangly legs and hanging head caught at the heart that day. Yet he caught, too, the imagination of a racing public which, for all its strenuously avowed cynicism, is in fact quite incurably romantic.

But just look at this King George. Here you have, at last, four of the finest eyes in Europe: proven contenders at the highest level, the winners of seven Group One races between them. These are horses who have been followed through a series of triumphs, near-misses, perhaps a few disappointments, but never, ever any disasters.

And yet how does the racing public react? It turns its back on all that splendour and experience, and insists it wants to marry a virgin instead.

This belief in the unknown, untried Royal Anthem—a belief which may well be vindicated but which on all the evidence appears somewhat starchy—is fascinating. It says something very interesting about what the public really wants from racing.

FOR example, on the face of it, High-Rise is simply superior version of Royal Anthem. He is also an unbeaten three-year-old and one of his victories is in the Derby. You might ask how much better a record a horse could have. Yet his Derby win—by a battling short head from City Honours, a horse considered to be nothing remarkable—is seen, in a strange way, to have exposed him. Unlike Royal Anthem he is "sublimed" by having had to show his very best.

And this is the quality which all the King George horses—except Royal Anthem—have in common: their limits are apparently known. The fact that these limits stretch about as far as is possible in the world of racing is not the point. The racing public may deny it, but what it still yearns for in its heart is for a horse that can transcend known parameters and take wing, carrying with it the dreams of those watching.

FA accused of Wembley 'hijack'

John Duncan reveals how Britain's new national stadium could be bought for just £1 and an interest-free Lottery loan

THE Football Association is on the verge of a multimillion-pound "hijack" of National Lottery funds to build the new national stadium, according to the local Wembley MP.

Documents seen by the Guardian support the view of Barry Gardiner, MP for Brent North, that the stadium at Wembley will ultimately become FA property rather than

belong to the nation despite £120 million of public money going towards the £330-million building costs.

"The FA have hijacked the National Stadium project," said Gardiner. "They have hijacked it from the British public who think that when they buy their Lottery ticket they are at least helping the nation to buy a national stadium that will belong to the

people of this country in perpetuity. But it won't."

That view is backed by a secret Grant Agreement Status Report, which details the state of negotiations between the FA and the Sports Council and indicates that the parties are agreed that the grant must be repaid in the event of a breach of grant conditions, and that in the event of such a breach, the FA has the right to buy the

freehold of the stadium for just £1. This could happen at any time during the next 125 years.

The FA would have to repay the £120 million Lottery money which the Sports Council is putting into the project but, incredibly, as things stand, it would be charged no interest on this sum — "no indemnity, no interest", according to the Grant Agreement Status Report.

That means the FA has effectively negotiated an interest-free loan from Lottery funds to build a stadium which it, rather than a publicly account-

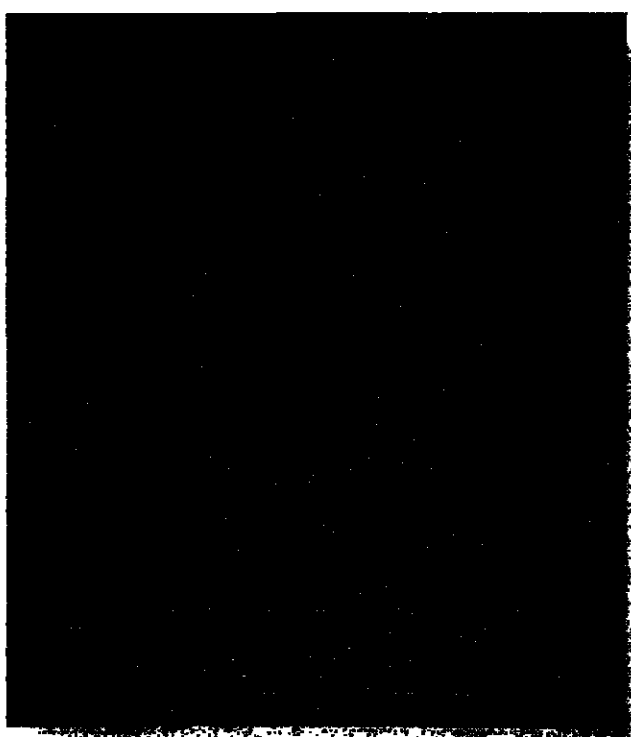
able body, will run. The project was intended to avoid such an eventuality.

"The British public will be furious to find out that they are not getting a national stadium at all," said Gardiner, "that what they are doing is helping the FA to fund building a stadium for themselves with an interest-free loan. The whole point of a national stadium is public accountability, public controls, not a stadium controlled by an unaccountable body."

"We've already had that with Wembley plc and look what a mess the place got into. The public deserve a national stadium which sets prices and access in the public interest, not in the interest of filling the coffers of the FA."

Gardiner's fears are shared by the body charged with safeguarding the public interest in the stadium, the English National Stadium Trust. The ESC grant and conditions, direct and indirect, will be geared towards ensuring that the public's interest in the national stadium is safeguarded," he said.

"The ESC has the option to ask for enhanced repayment, but also has the ability to insist on fulfilment of their original contract, even on repayment, so guaranteeing use of the national stadium for the three sports for 20 years."



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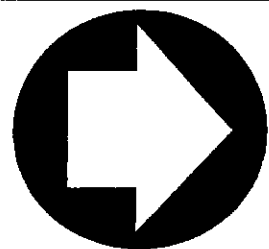
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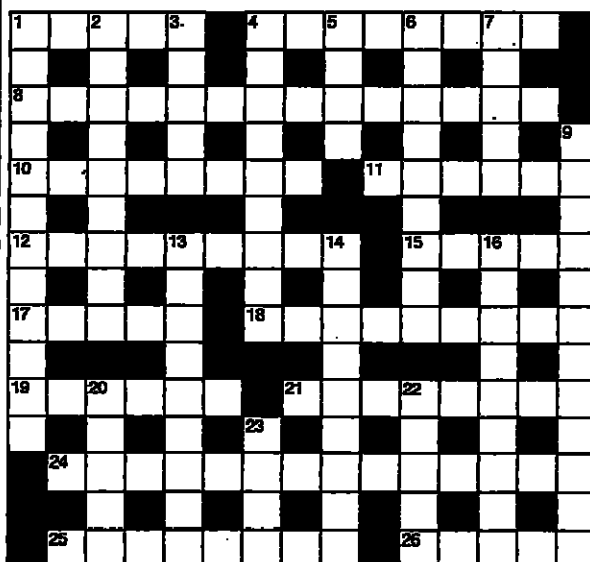
While most people probably dismiss the idea of open marriage as a charter for infidelity, the growing number of people in Britain who are beginning their marriages with mutual agreement that they will permit sexual openness argue that it is hypocrisy at a time when infidelity is at an all time high.

Angela Neustatter

G2 front

Guardian Crossword No 21,332

Set by Hendra

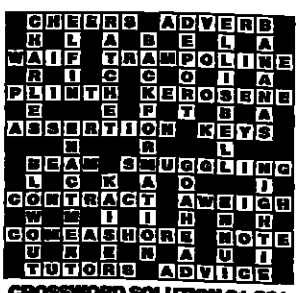


Across

- 1 Die in Palladium, having walked up and down (5)
- 4 Striking a pose in a style of an early satirist (9)
- 8 Fancy buying with lights dancing? (5-5)
- 10 Iris trim, ailing, with runny nose condition (9)
- 11 Lower the average in Cemptown? (6)
- 12 Air current that is constant blow to business (5,4)
- 13 Plant in ground (5)
- 17 Topic of those objectively taking English (5)
- 18 Celebrity in sergeants' mess? (9)
- 19 Issue raised by the Guardian sometimes (6)
- 21 Its sufferers have a reduction in shock (8)

Down

- 1 Juice is produced here with unusual waters in elbr (5,7)
- 2 Applicant Frank taking tea-break (5)
- 3 Long middle girder? (5)
- 4 Letting oneself down so, can be seen on the face (9)
- 5 Recognise station? (4)
- 6 One on top of table is shaken by season on grass (5-3)
- 7 Showgirl of 19 (5)
- 9 More than willing to throw out thin suitcase (12)
- 13 Promotion and rise (9)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,331

- 14 Each of this pair has a second helping (9)
- 16 Ditch-insect biting (9)
- 20 Wife-batterer in front of the kids (5)
- 22 The upper hand on the staff? (5)
- 23 House common in Kent area, close to motorway (4)

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